University of Alberta

Horizons of Possibility: How culture informs and shapes the practice of four visible minority teachers in Alberta

by

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"Bring those who have been excluded into the circle of intimate friends".

'Abdu'l-Baha

DEDICATION

- *I would like to dedicate my dissertation to those whose life circumstances have not allowed them to develop their scholarly potential. It is both a privilege and a sacred responsibility to use knowledge and opportunity in the service of others and I offer this work in that spirit.*

- *Secondly I would like to dedicate my struggle in the creation of this thesis, to those women who seek to hone their thinking and social analysis skills for the development of their communities. Raising a family, working to earn a living and maintaining social responsibilities to community while studying is an onerous task. I salute those stalwart women leaders in immigrant and Aboriginal serving agencies, academic institutions and cultural and religious communities who continue these multiple responsibilities without sacrificing one for the other.*

- *Thirdly I would like to dedicate this thesis to those people in my life who believed in my capacity to become a scholar, most particularly my wonderful husband Roger who saw my academic leanings long before I did.*

Abstract

This research is a qualitative group case study of four visible minority Alberta teachers exploring their complex relationships with culture, identity and teacher practice. Its purpose is to articulate experiences of belonging, influence, negotiation, resiliency and problem solving of visible minority teachers in predominately white school settings. Empirical evidence is used to illustrate both the unique qualities that the visible minority teachers in the study bring to teaching and the need for the education system to recognize and validate these qualities.

Theoretically, the research is based primarily on the principle of *recognition*, with regard to the creation of conditions necessary for an equitable world as articulated by Charles Taylor (1994), Nancy Fraser (2002, 1998) and Zigmund Bauman (2002). The *Recognition* theme is woven into a long-standing social sciences debate on *structure* and *agency*. A literature review showed limited reference to minority teacher capacity to move within the structures that surround them, or to exert influence upon those structures. This study teases out some of the possible spaces of agency in Alberta schools as experienced by study participants, in spite of ongoing obstacles of racism, intercultural resistance and social marginalization. Methodology was a combination of cultural identity-focused collaborative conversation and arts-prompts. Research took place in an informal small group setting during 7 research sessions over a period of 5 months.

Within the study constraints, findings showed that culturally informed visible minority teacher practice takes the shape of concern for social inclusion with particular emphasis on helping underperforming students to succeed. It is likely to use song, humor, game and other creative tools to promote a climate of interdependence and inclusion, but also likely to be exacting and rigorous. There is a critical reading of the curriculum and a strong likelihood that students will have their assumptions and biases challenged and placed in a social justice context.

Findings also revealed that characteristics of a supportive environment for visible minority teachers involved openness, willingness to offer support, hospitality and the dual capacity to critically read the curriculum and make space for a plurality of perspectives.

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To my oldest son Aaron, with whom I shared the academic journey and who completed his Masters in Music Composition as I completed my Doctorate in Education.

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"You are a map of a place I might like to visit". *Sarah Harmer*

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Chapter One Horizons of possibility

1.A. Introduction to the Research

1.a.I. Purpose and Research Questions

This research is a qualitative group case study of four "visible minority"[1] Alberta teachers exploring their complex relationships with culture, identity and teacher practice. Its purpose is to articulate experiences of belonging, influence, negotiation, resiliency and problem solving of visible minority teachers in predominantly white school settings, and to use findings from this exploration to highlight cultural strengths and tensions related to teaching and learning in Alberta schools.

The research methodology can be described as a *qualitative group case study*. To engage research participants with the themes of culture and identity in teaching, I met in my home with four visible minority teachers from four different cultural/racial/linguistic backgrounds for seven periods of three hours, over a span of five months. Since this research is intended to show depth and specificity and to use the experience of a few to generalize about how this might affect many, it can be described as both qualitative and dependent upon group processes as they were collectively experienced and observed during the research period.

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[1] Although the term "visible minority" has recently been contested by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 21 February, 2007, as defining non-white people as "other", I have not be able to find an unproblematic replacement reference that encompasses groups of people of color, hence my use of the term as explained on page 11 of this document.

During the research period, through *collaborative conversation* and *arts-based inquiry*, research participants of this study considered the question: In what ways do issues of culture inform and shape our teaching practice? My intent with this research was to focus upon three aspects of visible minority teacher dynamics: a) the processes of teacher growth through collective reflection on the role of culture in practice, b) the relationship of collaborative conversation and arts-based response to cultural understanding of teachers and, c) the implications of teacher cultural knowledge for educational institutions.

Hence my research questions became:

1. How do issues of culture inform and shape the teaching practices of four visible minority teachers?
2. What kinds of commonalities might emerge in the cultural orientations of four visible minority teachers? What are the implications of these commonalities for both preparation of teacher candidates and for professional development of in-service teachers?
3. In what ways can an understanding of visible minority teacher cultural identity lead to more responsive teaching of all races and cultures?
4. What is the combined role of arts prompts with collaborative conversation in the unfolding of cultural sense of self from tacit to explicit?

1.a.ii. Framing the research context

Why does this research matter? The Alberta teacher context with regard to immigration and Aboriginal demographics:

96.4% of teachers in Alberta are white, unilingual, born in Canada, with Canadian settlement ancestry usually going back several generations (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2004). In contrast, visible minority populations in Alberta stood at 17.5% in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2001 Census) and Aboriginal population from the same census at 4%. Between 2003 and 2005 international settlement in Alberta ranged between 10,000 and 15,000 each year. Many Alberta students speak several languages other than English (Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson & Zine, 2000). Teachers in Alberta are thus not representative of the student populations they teach.

The representation issue is a concern on several fronts. Firstly there are employment opportunity issues for visible minority teachers. If qualified visible minority teachers are available and if they have equal access and opportunity to employment in school districts, one would expect to see them represented in the profession at a similar percentage to Alberta's visible minority and Aboriginal populations. The fact that they are not representative raises questions about how teacher candidates are recruited to universities, how the teaching profession is perceived by Aboriginal and visible minority populations and how teachers are recruited and retained in Alberta school districts generally.

Secondly, I wonder how much visible minority teachers who are currently employed are able to fully contribute to their profession in such low numbers. What is their experience in schools? How do they access resources and information within schools? What are their relationships with students, parents of students, colleagues and administrators? Questions of visible minority teacher identity, voice, approach to curriculum and the role of culture also emerge.

Third, students who do not see themselves or their cultures represented in their teachers may not see themselves as capable of social, academic or economic success. This discrepancy between teachers and students with regard to race, ethnicity, language and culture alone may cause a disconnect for many students that affects their self esteem and behavior in many cases and their learning in some cases, as will be seen in the literature review of chapter three.

Hay, Khalema and Bavel (2003) reported in their Edmonton research, that of the 12 focus groups of approximately 25 parents per group, lack of teacher cultural awareness was cited as the most common complaint from both Aboriginal and visible minority parents with regard to their children's educational experience. Contrastingly, research in the area of culturally responsive teaching has identified teachers' "culture-specific" and "race specific" knowledge as critical for improving minority students' academic and social success (Crozier, 2005; Moke Ngala, 2005; Max, 2002; Ellis,1998).

In fact, teachers' cultural knowledge is deemed critical to the success of all students, irrespective of their racial, cultural or religious backgrounds (Torres, Santos, Peck & Cortes, 2004; Khalema, 2003; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 2003; Archibald, Pidgeon, Janvier, Commodore & McCormick, 2002; Solomon, R. P. & Razai-Rashti, G., 2001; Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson & Zine, 2000; Ladson-Billings,1994). Torres, Santos, Peck and Cortes (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of minority teacher recruitment in English speaking countries, namely the USA, Canada, Britain and Australia. Numerous links were made with the importance of cultural understandings to a variety of teacher concerns spanning hiring and retention issues to student social integration and willingness to assist marginalized student populations. Similar links regarding Aboriginal teacher recruitment and retention were made by the Archibald, Pidgeon, Janvier, Commodore and McCormick study (2002). Solomon and Razai-Rashti (2001) explain how the racial construction of teachers brings value laden biases to perception of students' capacity to learn, while Solomon and Levine-Rasky (2003) demonstrate that perceptions of equity in education are strongly influenced by experiences with race and culture. This is made more relevant to the Canadian context by Dei et al. (2000) in their book examining the role of classroom social inclusion to teacher practice based on race, culture and religion.

A limited, but useful illustration of culture's role in visible minority teacher practice, is the case study of two visible minority teachers in Alberta by Khalema (2003). Analysis of their discourse demonstrated tendencies to take a proactive advocacy role, focus on positive social change, make creative use of educational materials and engage in critical thinking based on their own historical and social positions. Recommendations from the study were to recognize, legitimize, acknowledge and support racialized pedagogical strategies, which showed appreciation for diverse cultures and sensitivity to cultural practice generally.

Given the above problematics and recommendations of previous studies to further address the issue of culture in teaching, this research is based on the premise that increased understanding of visible minority teacher cultural identity and experience in Alberta schools is critical to making adjustments to the current problematic of unequal representation. It is rooted in the premise that increased representation is likely to be improved with increased recognition and valuing of the unique contributions that visible minority teachers bring to their practice. In summary this research seeks to demonstrate both the links of culture to learning as they are explained and demonstrated by visible minority research particiants in this study, and the effect of this cultural meaning-making process on the research participants' own sense of professional identity and efficacy.

1.a.iii. Underlying theoretical foundation: recognition, structure and agency

In this study, I bring forward empirical evidence to both the qualities that these visible minority teachers bring to their teaching and to show perceived inadequacies in the system that they are uniquely positioned to address from their various individual and cultural perspectives. Theoretically, I am basing the research primarily on the principle of *recognition*, with regard to the creation of conditions necessary for an equitable world as articulated in the writing of Charles Taylor (1994), Zigmund Bauman (2002) and Nancy Fraser (2002, 1998). In general terms, the study may be considered a bounded small group case study application of the concept of recognition with a group of in-service visible minority teachers as they consider their practice in the light of cultural influences.

The concept of recognition in this context is intimately woven into a long standing social sciences debate on the topic of *structure and agency.* I am interested in the dynamics of interplay between the *agency power* of individual visible minority teachers in an educational system that is predominantly white, capitalist and eurocentric, and that of the *structural influences* of educational institutions upon these same teachers. During the literature review process, I noted limited reference to minority teacher capacity to move within the structures that surround them, or to exert influence upon those structures. This seemed to be dissonant with my personal experience with friends and co-workers of a variety of races and cultures. Through this study I hope to tease out the dialogic and dialectical spaces of agency, within the limitations of the study, in an attempt to portray a less deterministic portrait of the complex reality of four visible minority teachers in Alberta schools.

The uniqueness of my study is found in the particular understandings brought to recognition issues via the combined methodology of collaborative conversation and arts-based prompts operating together to bring cultural knowledge from the tacit to the explicit. The importance of my methodology to the findings and the manner with which my findings were coded, combined and brought to analysis is explained in detail in the following chapter. Prior to speaking about methodology, however, it is important for reasons of intent and transparency, to reveal my values orientation to the research.

1.a.iv. Underlying social order orientation: equitable world

In my definition of an *equitable world*, individuals and groups are recocognized on the basis of equal human worth and dignity, for the unique combination of characteristics they are; both presently and potentially. Within this recognition, none are excluded from equal access to education, employment, health care, use of public space or benefits of public goods, or participation in civil, political, institutional or religious institutions. Existing obstacles to full recognition and participation are deliberately and systematically dissolved to the point that, should an individual wish to move forward in any of the above areas of human experience, no dominant or oppressive individual or structure would block that movement; rather the existing support structures would encourage and faciliate such progress towards the realization of potential. Susan Wolf (1994) elaborates:

> But the politics of recognition urges us not just to make efforts to recognize the other more actively and accurately – to recognize those people and those cultures that occupy the world in addition to ourselves – it urges us also to take a closer, less selective look at who is sharing the cities, the libraries, the schools we call our own. There is nothing wrong with alloting a special place in the curriculum for the study of our history, our literature, our culture. But if we are to study our culture, we had better recognize who we, as a community, are (p. 85).

Wolf points to the reality that communities around the world are increasingly, multicultural, and that individuals frequently have several points of cultural identification. Not to recognize this is tantamount to dismissal of realities outside of the white Western European experience, effectively shutting out learning from perspectives that already occupy spaces in our daily realities. To address this issue, the study of culture's multifacted roles in the establishment of an equitable world becomes axial. There is a certain dis-ease between multicultural goals and a liberal democratic ideology that does not speak of the influence of either culture or unequal power relations in the capacity of a given society to provide equal opportunities to benefit from liberal democracy. My research starts at this place of discomfort.

The premise of equal recognition on the grounds of equal human worth and dignity however, does not ignore the necessary duty of all to contribute responsibly towards the active building of a community and its ensusing community structures that would ensure such recognition. The correlate of individual recognition is the degree to which the individual contributes to the conditions that allow other individuals to be recognized, often refered to as citizenship – and this recognition does not allow individuals or groups who desire to harm or destroy themselves, others or the environment, from carrying out their designs. It has as a premise that to learn to live peacefully together where all have equal rights, aggression or dominance are not acceptable, neither are war and violence. It also assumes that each has a moral responsibility for self development, for healthy interpersonal interactions and for contributing towards solving the problems of one's community.This is essentially the foundational premise of primary source teachings of all the world religions and can be traced back philosphocially as far as Socrates and Plato (Hadas, 1950) and Rumi and al-Suhrawardi (12th century Persian philosopher who founded "Illuminationist Philosophy" (Ziai & Leaman, 1998).

Neither does this worldview of equal recognition eradicate differences of effort, talent or worth. Honors attributed to or earned by individuals would not be inconsequential. A virtuoso musician or exempary athlete, a talented business person or influential public figure would not become neutralized under the politics of recognition. Neither would socially connected families or royal lineages, civil societies or interest groups lose their places of respect or capacity to advocate for their interests. Rather the unique attributes and contributions of both individuals and groups would be better appreciated and enjoyed by a greater number of people who had themselves enjoyed theopportunities to develop their own potential and as such would be in a better position to give credit where credit is due and to form thoughtful opinions of value. In this regard Taylor (1994) writes:

> There must be something midway between the inauthentic and homogenizing demand for recognition of equal worth, on the one hand, and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards, on the other. There are other cultures, and we have to live together more and more, both on a world scale and commingled in each individual society (p. 72).

It is this "something midway" that I seek to articulate in this research. My articulation of this sought-after world of equal recognition of human worth and dignity, balanced with responsible citizenship and due appreciation for excellence, is an opportunity to temper, not neutralize, extremes of wealth and poverty, of privilege and deprivation, and of erudition and ignorance. In an attempt to be as transparent as possible, I would state that my values orientation places me firmly in the camp of idealism rooted in moral responsiveness, informed by a desire to rectify injustice and oppression. The vehicle I have chosen for this journey is that of a more complex portrayal of a phenomenon that may have been deemed inconsequential: the cultural contributions of visible minority teachers to teaching and learning in Alberta schools.

1.B. Key definitions for the study:

For the purposes of this study I will define several key concepts as I use them throughout the disseration. Clarification about my use of the word "visible minority" is a necessary first step. Secondly, I will address concepts of culture, race and ethnicity as they pertain to my understanding of identity. In subsequent chapters, I will review related overarching concepts that affect the unfolding of the research concerning anti-racism, white privilege, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism and colonization. Concepts that I will not be explore in detail within this study are gender and sexuality, religion or social class although there are references to these themes throughout as they pertain to the data. I use capitalization in the words "Black" and "Aboriginal" because at the time of writing, this is common practice among the majority of authors referring to their respective groups.

1.b.i. ***Visible minority*** is used in this study as a catch-all phrase to refer to teachers who do not consider themselves white and as defined by Statistics Canada demographic categories. It does not include Aboriginal, as I understand Aboriginal peoples to be First Nations inhabitants of North America and as such, involving a thoughtful consideration that is outside the boundaries of this study. Within the visible minority category I refer to people of color who have immigrated to Canada during their own lifetime, refugees who came to

Canada from traumatic circumstances in their countries of origin and first generation Canadian children who were born in Canada to immigrant parents of color. In this document, I refer to "first generation Canadians" as those born to parents who immigrated to Canada.

1.b.ii. I use ***culture*** as an overarching term under which many aspects of identity can be understood. The closest definitional match with my understanding of culture comes from UNESCO which defines *Culture* as: "largely unarticulated but commonly understood values, beliefs, traditions and moral and aesthetic principles" (MONDIACULT, 1982, par. 30) informing both personal and social thought and behavior patterns and tendencies (UNESCO, 1986, par. 24). UNESCO divides this further with the concepts of *macro-culture* and *micro-culture. Macro-culture* implies societal pattering learned in childhood, largely assumed rather than articulated. When it becomes visible through art, music, architecture, dance and other cultural manifestations that can be articulated outside of the self, macro-culture becomes culture with a capital "C". An equivalent term would be Bennett's (1998) *Culture One. Micro-culture* is understood to refer to smaller manifestations of cultural patterning, under the umbrella of, or resistant to macro-culture. Underlying both macro and micro culture are hidden values and assumptions that only become visible in contrast with what is perceived as different, or other. Bennett calls this invisible aspect of culture, *Culture Two.* In this study, I consider both micro and macro implications of culture as they can be applied to the educational contexts and life experiences of the research participants.

1.b.iii. ***Race*** is understood to be a *socially* determined category that has been defined by a dominant group to create real social consequences for subordinate groups (Li, 2003). Although I will briefly explain the historical context of racial category development, I do not explore race from any perspective other than its social consequences for the participants of this study and those they name or to whose examples they refer. Race is considered as a subset of culture to allow participants to articulate from the entire arena of their experience, the subtleties of agency in ways that are meaningful to them. Had I placed primary emphasis on race rather than culture, it may have limited the study's potential to focus on capacities and contributions of visible minority teachers by limiting discussion to themes where only racial difference and racial marginalization could be invoked.

1.b.iv. ***Ethnicity*** is understood to be an involuntary category of social reference into which people are born and through which a complex process of socialization takes place. Ethnicity may involve several subsets of belonging to various groups, which occurs through displacement, immigration, religious affiliation, linguistic affiliation, social class and status and degrees of fluency with accepted ethnic norms and folk practices (Appiah, 1994).

1.b.v. Culture, race and ethnicity are combined in this study in various ways to provide a portrait of individual visible minority teachers' attachments to ***Identity***. In this study, I am concerned with identity as it relates to professional self-concept influenced by culture. The focus on teacher cultural identity looks to find intersections between personal cultural identity and professional identity constructs.

My study is particularly informed by the work of those who have researched links between race, ethnicity and culture to identity generally and to teachers specifically. Canadian researcher/writers that have influenced me in this domain are Ghosh and Abdi (2004), Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson & Zine (2000) and Joshee (1996). American researchers whose influence can be noted throughout the dissertation are Ladson-Billings (1994) and Madsen & Mabokela (2005). Although vastly different in approach, all four references show multiple intersections of ethnicity, race and political agenda in cultural self-concept; Ghosh & Abdi (2004) and Joshee (1996) more from a visible minority student concept, Dei et al. (2000) from a community perspective and Ladson-Billings (1994) and Madsen & Mabokela (2005) from a visible minority teacher point of view.

From the teacher identity perspective generally, I find the work of Britzman (2003), Solomon and Razai-Rashti (2001) and Carson and Johnston (2000) to be most closely aligned with identity constructs of this study. Their clarification of points of teacher resistance/perceived threat to identity when confronted with difficult self-knowledge, and their sensitive considerations of the complexities of teaching, the realities of schools and conflicting co-existing identity constructs were useful underpinnings for the exploration of teacher cultural identity. There is also a post-colonialist influence from the Haitian writer Verges (2002) who introduced a concept that I found most fitting to the identity statements of the Black teachers in my study, that of creolization, or "browning" of the world.

The focus on visible minority teacher cultural identity looks to find the intersections between personal cultura identity constructs. It focuses on the unique experiences of four visible minority teachers and seeks to better understand their lives in schools.

1.C. A brief explanation about the focus of this study

A pilot study that I conducted with white teachers two years prior to this inquiry brought up issues of unrecognized white privilege and unconscious systemic racism that I did not wish to revisit. In order to hear the voices of visible minority teachers and avoid possible issues of white racism, I chose to work only with visible minority participants.

This decision will be explained in more detail in subsequent sections on the effects of white privilege and the influences of multiculturalism and anti-racism in education. It has been my observation prior to undertaking this research, that discourse on culture in a predominantly visible minority group setting encourages visible minority participants to articulate creative resilience and success stories as well as to explore the frustrations and barriers they experience.

Second, I assumed that a focus on cultural knowledge with visible minority teachers would likely increase teacher self-confidence and efficacy. Australian researchers Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of of recent research into characteristics of effective professional development programs. Their findings identify increased teacher confidence as directly linked to improved results with students. Other links to both changed teacher practice and effect on student success, were teachers' perception of access to professional development as indication of personal and professional value, and support of teacher learning through regular meetings and discussions. These findings are supportive of the process of my research which provided visible minority teachers with an opportunity for professional development that highlighted their intrinsic value, their experience, their struggles and their tools for success within discriminatory environments. The processes of regular collaborative conversation with arts-prompts for self discovery, opened doors to participants' understanding of the significant role of culture for teaching and learning. Results of this oppportunity and process were observable in the increased confidence of participants throughout the research and their own statements by the end of the study.

Third, the learning of the visible minority teachers during our study can be a source of inspiration as well as serving as a resource guide for other visible minority teachers. The effect of the participants' stories on each other is in itself a tool for deepened understanding of the foundational and complex repercussions of culture on all teachers regardless of their race and background.

Fourth, as a white researcher I hope to improve my own cultural and intercultural competency by opening myself to the knowledge of teachers from various racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. My understandings and learning could be helpful to other white teachers by providing them with bridges to worlds they may be fearful to cross. Placing myself in a minority position with a group of visible minority teachers made the conditions for positive inter-group interaction more likely to occur – a conscious response to one of the complaints of the McGregor and Ungerleider (2004) meta-analysis which is highlighted in the literature review. This choice was significant in attempting to address the power imbalance that exists between researchers and participants and between dominant and minority cultures. It allowed spaces of dialogue to emerge that may otherwise have been closed.

Fifth, cultural knowledge of visible minority teachers can inform the capacity of educational institutions to attract and retain diverse candidates (Torres, Santos, Peck & Cortes, 2004, Lundy & Lawrence, 1995). From statistics indicating issues of visible minority teacher representation (Canadian Teachers' Federations, 2004; Alberta Learning, Policy Sector, 2001) and those of declining enrollment in teacher education institutions from both visible minority and Aboriginal populations (Carr and Klassen, 1997), it appears that inadequate attention has been paid to identifing and eliminating obstacles that prevent visible minority teachers from entering Canadian teacher education programs.

1.D. Gaining access to research participants

The research began with a long procedure of working to gain access to visible minority teachers for my study. The small number of visible minority teachers in central Alberta made the task difficult to begin with. As was previously mentioned, two years prior to undertaking this inquiry, I conducted a pilot project with a group of white teachers. Although I initially planned to have both visible minority and white teachers in the pilot project, it proved much more difficult to both find and convince visible minority teachers to be participants. Since I was working within a tight time line, I made the decision to take on the initial inquiry with white teachers and attend to the visible minority access issue when I could devote more time to it.

For my doctoral study, I was fortunate to be offered a job that would put me into contact with possible research participants. The spring following my pilot study, I accepted a position as educational coordinator and Francophone liaison for the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations. My employment provided me with opportunities to receive phone calls from parents and teachers who had experienced racism and were looking for a sympathetic ear. I was also responsible for collaborative activities with a number of agencies and cultural communities that facilitated access to groups previously unknown to me, such as various African groups in the Francophone community.

Interestingly, my job also gave me opportunities to re-connect with some of my previous student teachers, both French and English. Occasionally I was the keynote speaker for conferences, and increasingly I worked as a workshop presenter, both of which expanded my access to teachers from a variety of school districts in Alberta. It was not uncommon for visible minority audience members to seek me out following workshops or presentations. After approximately one year at my job, I began contacting potential research participants to request them to join the research team.

I was not surprised to find resistance or hesitancy from those I approached. Some were highly suspicious of my motivation in spite of my overt explanation that the research was intended to help increase hiring and retention of visible minority teachers to change what I perceived to be a white-dominated and unjust system. Others were afraid that consequences of the study could jeopardize their current or future job possibilities in spite of assurances of anonymity. A few told me outright that if my study wasn't going to make a direct difference for visible minority teachers, they were not interested in participating in what appeared to be more meaningless and ineffective study rather than political action. Many were concerned that without remuneration they would not be able to justify taking time away from other responsibilities. But the most frequent response was inability to accept yet another commitment from sheer exhaustion. I realized that one request may not be enough to win the confidence of the people I was contacting in spite of the fact that they were all known to me through my current or previous work, so I offered possible participants several opportunities to say yes to the research.

Throughout this process I came to know more about the lives of those I was contacting. Without exception, they had very complex personal circumstances. At work they were constantly approached by students from all races who saw them as more accessible than other teachers and more willing to listen to their problems. Immigrant parents of students were more likely to approach the visible minority teachers in whom they saw an ally, making their teaching days increasingly longer and more emotionally draining.

For those potential visible minority candidates approached, previous debt and current instability of teaching contracts obligated them to take part-time jobs or temporary positions outside of the school system to supplement their income. Many had extended family members either with them or in other countries who depended upon them for financial and emotional support. There were intergenerational misunderstandings between those who had immigrant parents living in Canada and their teen or adult children. These difficulties required frequent family emergency interventions by the adult children who were perceived as bridges between the old country and Western ways of doing things. Children of visible minority teachers were subjected to the same discrimination and racism that confronted their parents and needed extra attention at home to provide a buffer to their school experiences and give them a sense of cultural pride. Added to all this was the lack of understanding white colleagues had of the difficulties their visible minority colleagues were facing, exacerbated by staffroom conversations about Club Med vacations, golf weekends, misinformed assumptions about culture, race, ethnicity and religion, and discriminatory comments about students in the staff room. I was exhausted just listening to their lives and understood perfectly well when they declined to participate in the research.

Finally, I received an affirmative answer from four teachers: two first generation Canadian visible minority teachers from Armenian and Malawian families and two immigrant teachers from Cameroon and Rwanda. This confirmation process took four months. Those who accepted were known to me in the following ways. The Armenian descendant teacher had been a participant in a project I attempted to coordinate in the Francophone community, the Malawian descendant teacher's mother was known to me through my job at NAARR. She directed me to her son who was teaching in one of the Alberta school districts. I met both the Cameroonian and Rwandan teachers when they were student teachers three years prior. Because they had previously met me, they were willing to consider working with me in the research context. Three of the participants were from African countries and one born in Canada to parents of Eastern European origin. More detailed participant descriptions are provided in Chapter three. Following ethics approval by the University of Alberta I began my research in the spring of 2005 (Appendix A). It is important to note that the entire process of gaining access and confirming participation took 18 months.

1.E. Participant backgrounds and research meeting procedure

Research meetings began in June of 2005 and finished in the second week of October, 2005. Seven meetings were held over a span of five months. Due to many of the previously mentioned complexities, the Cameroonian participant missed four research meetings, the Rwandan participant missed three and the Malawian and Armenian descendents missed one meeting each, with a total of only three meetings with all participants present, four with three present and two with two present. Although I was initially disconcerted about this, the dynamics of the group were such that the immigrant teachers spoke the most frequently, so when they were not present, first generation visible minority teachers had more opportunities to express their points of view, balancing the data. All meetings were audio recorded and arts artifacts were kept as data. I made transcriptions of each audio recording and condensed the transcriptions into 3-5 page synopsis statements that were reviewed by participants at each meeting.

Meetings were three hours long each and consisted of reading and commenting on the synopsis, conversation about issues of culture and teaching and arts inquiry forays. The issues for each meeting came out of the previous transcriptions as did the arts inquiry activities. Meeting trajectory is as follows:

Table 1 Research meeting trajectories

Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Meeting 4	Meeting 5	Meeting 6	Meeting 7
Introductions (who you are, your teaching experience). Introduction to the research, signing consent forms, discussion about research meeting dates. Distribution of articles to read (Gervais, 2005; Carson & Johnston, 2000; Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield & Trumbull, 1999).	Discussion of synopsis 1. Visualization "Places I have lived". Visual response with chalk, paper, glue. Home assignment: Create a visual representation of yourself culturally AND read articles and be ready to respond at the next meeting.	Discussion of synopsis 2. Share visual assignment responses. Discuss articles and responses. Write poem: I am from… (Saldaña, 2000). Discuss poems. Home reading: Read multicultural math articles (D'Ambrosio, Zaslavsy, Gerdes, Silverman, Strawser, Strohauer, Manzno & Eglash, 2001).	Discussion of synopsis 3. Share more visuals from last week. Look at Marie's collection of cultural teaching resources and choose some you would use. Explain why and how. Create percussion ensemble and discuss repercussions in culture and teaching. Assignment: bring your teaching resources to share with the group.	Discussion of synopsis 4. Share teaching resources brought by participants and discuss their impact. Dramatic tableau on theme of belonging. Discussion about the tableaux. Assignment: bring a song to share with the group that has significance for you.	Discussion of synopsis 5. Share songs, share teaching resources. Discussion about teaching practice. Write an imaginary letter to a person who has influenced your decision to be a teacher. Share the letter with the group.	Discussion of synopsis 6, research experience in general. Pot-luck lunch and discussion about visible minority teacher particulars. How has this study affected you as a teacher or anything else in your life? What is your sense of yourself culturally now? Share multi-perspective maps and global mindedness from synopsis

1.F. Predominant Researcher roles

Since as a qualitative case study researcher, I am an instrument of data collection (Merriam, 1988), the consideration of how I frame my relationship with research participants is of singular importance. Stake (1995) identifies some of the most prominent researcher roles as teacher, advocate, evaluator, biographer and interpreter. In my particular research context, artist and facilitator are other roles to add to the list. I intended to overtly engage participants in a variety of experiences to heighten their sensibilities towards the concepts of culture, their own cultural underpinnings, their evolutions within culture and their own cultural reciprocity with students. As such, my primary researcher roles were that of teacher, artist and facilitator.

With teacher cultural identity as the phenomenon to be explored, my desire to engage participants by increasing their awareness, confidence and engagement in the issues of culture in education makes the study bounded and predominantly *teacher*-role influenced. If, however, it were only influenced by a desire to educate, my experience with participants would not be research. What I seek to understand are the ways of knowing, life experiences, capabilities, cultural patterns and worldviews of my participants. Because of their mutual desire to educate, they too sought to teach me and each other about the realities of their lives. Mutual trust developed through the meetings enabled participants to challenge assumptions and reflect on their locations in the world. My role as *artist* was key in evoking response through alternate ways of perceiving and understanding the world. Finally, I perceive the *facilitator* aspect of my researcher role to include mutual nurturing and healing as participants engaged with these sensitive aspects of their lives.

In this bounded case study, I was both a participant in the study engaging in a mutually valued journey together with fellow travelers, and the facilitator who provided the conditions within which this mutual journey may take place. This dual relationship placed me in a particular position of power vis-à-vis the research. I came to the inquiry from a more academically informed perspective than my participants. Additionally, I had more access to information in the field and have worked to hone my social analysis skills.

Finally, as surrounded with the invisible privileges of whiteness, I needed to be vigilant to the constant danger of tacit attitudes of white tendencies to insinuate, silence, direct or control. Only the establishment of a trusting relationship where all were free to speak personally, controversially, and critically of their experience and our experience together would contribute to the balancing of the power relationship. From all verbal reports of participants, they perceived the foundational premises for our study to be mutual respect, privacy, integrity, clear communication, willingness to resolve any misunderstandings and transparency.

1.G. Moving toward the horizon: How I came to this Research

I am the daughter of a German immigrant father and a first generation Canadian mother of Russian and Romanian parents. My mother's parents fled their respective countries where they were subjected, along with many other people, to oppressive feudal lords. Although I never met my grandparents, my mother's pride in her family's capacity to survive and prosper and to build community in a harsh new land is a strong part of my sense of who I am. As a teacher, my mother was sensitive to injustice and worked to help struggling students, remembering her own difficulties and poverty as a child. Predominant in my own memory is an incident when I was a child that epitomizes the way my mother lived her principles. After much saving, my mother and father arranged for a family trip with the five of us, to go to Germany and meet my father's relatives. There our relatives took us to castles and cathedrals in an effort to be good hosts and show us the sights. My mother's reaction was deep revulsion. She told our hosts that she didn't want to see any more examples of how rich bullies had built their empires while the people starved. From then on, we visited people, fields and farms, helped out in the kitchen and became part of the family.

My father's attitude on how we should interact with others was also justice-based. He was one of the youngest of a large German family living close to a small German town called Meppen during the Nazi regime. Too young to be drafted himself, my father experienced the death of three of his brothers over a period of one year during the war. He lived through bombing and refugee families living in his family's small farmhouse for several years. His parents refused to fly the Nazi flag and provided shelter and escape, no questions asked, to anyone seeking refuge. My father told me it didn't matter what you looked like, what you believed or who you were as long as you could talk to everyone with respect. He prided himself in knowing enough about everything and everyone in the world to be able to strike up a conversation that would make any newcomer feel welcome.

My father had a soft spot in his heart for the excluded and the marginalized, with whom he identified strongly. At every holiday season, our house was graced with people from the hospital where he worked as a nursing orderly; patients and staff from all social classes who were "not from here and need a friendly place to celebrate, like me". I learned Jamaican stories, listened to Italian accordion players, and ate the Japanese food from my father's best friend's first

Japanese food store in Alberta. As a child, I was jealous of the Ukrainian ribbons and red boots of my classmates who got to miss math to "dance Ukrainian" and I longed to read the Chinese characters of my fellow piano student's notebook as we waited for our lessons.

I attended school either in or near the places where my mother taught which involved frequent moves and a keen awareness that I was always the newcomer, unaware of the social rules of each school and the object of amusement and ridicule when I made the mistakes an outsider is inevitably prone to. Both in and out of school I was a favorite target for bullies. No teacher ever intervened on my behalf and since I was intensely conscious of my mother's role as primary wage earner in the family, I hesitated to confide my dilemma to her since I knew she had to take the three of us where it was convenient or where she could find before and after school care at a reasonable price. I was scared, bruised, sore and with few friends throughout my elementary and junior high school years.

At one point I asked my father what to do about the bully problem. He responded as he often did to my questions as a child; with a story from his own life. Apparently when he was young and at his country school during the war, there was a large older boy who my father saw picking on a grade one child. My father was only one year older in grade two at the time, but he was incensed at the injustice of the situation and told the bully in no uncertain terms to leave the younger child alone. The bully laughed, turned his attention to my father and proceeded to beat him black and blue. But from that day onwards, the bully never touched either the other child or my father. My father told me to swallow my fear, stand up for myself and for anyone else who was being persecuted because the power of integrity would win out in the end even if it didn't appear that way initially. I took that lesson to heart and the bullying stopped. I believe my sensitivity to the pain of others is largely due to knowing what it feels like myself.

Throughout high school I was highly involved in the arts, playing the piano and singing, performing in plays and contributing to visual art festivals. I found a new community of friends who didn't belong and who enjoyed communication across difference as I did. My sense of self was quite firmly rooted in longing to know, teaching music to young children and being an artist in such wise as to contribute to solving some aspect of the world's social problems. Another characteristic of my high school years was a systematic and serious investigation of religion. I went to every variety of religious event that presented itself and became obsessed with finding a religion that would apply to all peoples and welcome differences, much to the horror of my Catholic parents.

I took my parents' newcomer pride with me ("other than the First Peoples everybody is an immigrant here – that's who we are" was a constant comment from my father) and furthered the education my father would have liked to continue himself. In university I availed myself of the opportunity to study in French and lived several months in Grenoble, France to become more fluent in the language and shortly after married into a French Canadian family. At the birth of our first son, my husband and I converted to the Baha'i Faith – the religion I finally found that embraced all peoples. Both as a Baha'i and as a new teacher, I was in a complex world of differences ranging from East/West cultural misunderstandings and race relations to social class quandaries. It was an exciting place to be and in spite of the difficulties, I have loved the journey of both experiences.

My teaching career spans 17 years, over half teaching in French Immersion or Francophone schools, from kindergarten to grade 12. I have many culture-based stories to tell from my teaching background. Among others, there was the Caribbean family of 17 that showed up to every parent-teacher interview for their nephew; the constant work to convince a traditional Chinese family that their daughter was worth paying attention to and who finally showed up for one of her performances in tears at the years they had missed out on her talent; the conversations with one of my Muslim drama students about what it was like to be fasting when none of her friends understood why; the Métis and First Nations foster children who disappeared just as we were becoming friends; and the fundamentalist teacher who tried to have me fired because I was promoting peace activities on Remembrance Day.

From all this, the experience of my last seven years of junior high drama teaching led me to my Master's thesis on using process drama to see how junior high students articulated and lived their values. Since then I have gone on to work in other multicultural settings, both as a volunteer and in paid positions. As part of my university teaching, I was profoundly affected by one supervisory position involving placement of African teachers in French Immersion schools in Edmonton. Their experience of cultural shock in the schools and the resistance their cooperating teachers showed towards them very much disturbed me. My research in teacher cultural identity is a direct outpouring of this life and work experience, which has led me to the current horizon at which I stand.

Stenhouse (1975) uses a metaphor that most closely describes both the way I see culture: we are standing on the "horizon of the possible". Standing implies rooted-ness to those aspects of identity that define our sense of who we are. Looking towards the horizon of what *could be* implies agency; learning, change, and capacity to consider the views of others. In the context of this research, culture is viewed as changing and malleable, yet peppered with points of resistance and attachment. On the other hand, culture provides a structural framework for understanding the world that is only gradually changeable, given its complexity and far reaching implications for groups, societies and nations. Although culture can be influenced, it cannot be "undone". Culture involves simultaneously both structure and agency.

1.H. Getting ready for the journey: Influence of previous pilot study on current research

1.h.i. Description of pilot project with white teachers

In winter 2003, I conducted a pilot project exploration of teaching and culture, with a group of six Central-Alberta Caucasian teachers working in culturally diverse or First Nations classrooms and with one student teacher. The study, under the title of "Teacher Cultural Belief" confirmed findings of other studies that showed White teachers frequently perceive themselves as race-less and culture-less (Baszile, 2001; Isajiw, 1999).

Participants explored the question "What is culture?" and engaged in arts-based and collaborative conversation-based inquiries into their own cultural underpinnings. Specifically, they participated in literary, dramatic and visual responses to culture-based stories, visual classroom aides and dramatic enactments based on a collection of researcher teaching resources that were culturally evocative. The objective of the pilot project was to determine how teacher thought and practice would evolve through arts-based exploration of culture in a group setting of supportive teachers.

Although I initially planned to have a study with teachers of varied racial backgrounds, this proved problematic. On the other hand, I had no difficulty convincing most white teachers I approached to participate in the project, even though only two of the six were known to me. Once I had the commitments of six very enthusiastic white teachers, given the pilot project timeline, I felt obligated to begin.

For the teachers in my pilot study, cultural identity appeared to impact: a) attitudes towards others, b) choice of proposed classroom resources and, c) lesson planning in teacher practice. Unexpected findings were the revelation of educational institutions and frequently schools as cultural sites that were deemed oppressive to teachers and the significance of gender as a cultural underpinning in teaching.

Methodology for this pilot study involved exposure to cultural resources for teacher education and classroom use and the unfolding of collaborative conversations. Research participants explored the concept of culture over a period of five meetings in two months. The research process was probed by reading scholarly articles about culture, engaging in collective arts-based exercises and through individual reflections that were literary, image-based and dramatic.

All teacher participants taught Social Studies, spanning grades 3-9 collectively, in six very different school settings, respectively: a school on Hobbema Reserve, an ethnically diverse inner city school in Edmonton, a predominantly Caucasian, bedroom community school in Spruce Grove, a high immigrant population North-Edmonton school and a representative of the Elementary Education After-Degree program at the University of Alberta. Two of the six participants had experience with arts learning.

The action research and cultural exploration purpose and two-month time line of the project was explained to each participant individually, emphasizing: a) the benefits of collaborative cultural exploration in the company of other professionals, b) an opportunity to explore several arts processes with which they may not be familiar and, c) ensuring that they would be secondary authors in the reporting of our research together.

Collaborative conversations were audio-recorded, transcribed and photocopied for participants who then made corrections or clarifications. Emerging themes and questions were typed and given to participants at each meeting for further discussion. Either written or arts-based reflection assignments were collected and filed for analysis. Analysis consisted of identifying data themes as they emerged repeatedly over time or as they proved controversial during the research meetings. Overviews of participant statements and responses to those overviews were regularly reflected upon individually and collectively. A final group statement emerged representing our findings.

Findings demonstrated that teacher participants were appreciative of the opportunity to explore the concept of culture as it related to teaching and regularly commented that “our” project was “always in the back of my mind”. They began to question their values, motivation and teaching styles along cultural considerations. Participants commented that they framed daily experiences within cultural terms, asking themselves, “Is this a cultural issue or a personality difference?” Some were surprised that family history and ancestry were more important to them than they had originally believed. They found personal and professional identification with their ancestral stories. Others embraced more broadly the macro concept of culture within the constructs of what it meant to be a “Canadian” or a “World Citizen” finding ancestral links to identity to be too small and confining for who they believed they currently were.

Within the study constraints, teacher participants required time to reflect upon and process their own sense of themselves as cultural beings prior to reflecting upon their practice and choice of teaching resources. Although I was initially disconcerted at the intense personal discovery participants were making, I came to see this process as foundational to professional development. In addition to requiring intellectual and personal process time, participants needed to feel secure within the research group. They grappled with a sense of incompetence in spite of the fact that they were all outstanding teachers.

As participants felt secure within the project, they became consistently challenging of their own assumptions. There was significant increase in comments unveiling systemic oppression such as racism, gender issues and institutional exploitation. Readings of resources became more critical and interpersonal communication and analysis of participant-created artifacts more provocative. Interestingly, mutual admiration and increasingly appreciative comments flourished concurrently. Participants began to view resources from multiple perspectives that attempted to balance political implications for themselves within their school settings along with a responsive consideration of the effect of resources upon their students. Lesson and unit ideas that were more creative and incorporated a wider consideration of learning styles also became evident, which may be attributed to both the arts emphasis and explorative nature of the study.

Participants claimed significant learning from interaction with each other, becoming particularly aware of prejudiced attitudes towards Aboriginal and Middle-Eastern students, yet remained unaware of or justified strong anti-American sentiments. They stated that arts processes had challenged and surprised them and that they more frequently integrated arts-based exploration into their lesson planning and teaching as a result of the study. An important finding was the change in participant attitude toward culture as a site to be explored, interrogated and healed. From initial ideas of culture as an entertaining adjunct to the real work of education, culture became central to the concerns of teaching, learning and interacting with others. Participants gained in confidence, became more oriented to equity and social justice issues and felt they had tools to justify their teaching practice should they be questioned.

None of the participants commented on the role of collaborative conversation in their cultural discoveries or teaching practice. When asked directly, they stated that the opportunity to learn with colleagues was very much appreciated, as was as the safer context of exploration of a sensitive topic with teachers who did not work in their respective schools. Comments about the arts-based inquiry process were associated with emotions of fear and incompetence, which eventually gave way to a sense of increased professional and personal power. The arts processes appeared to be key in increasing confidence to explore both issues of culture and teacher practice.

Although participants mentioned more and more frequently their awareness of cultural attitudes and incidents that were disadvantaging to certain groups, they did not locate their own practice within the realm of white privilege and in varied degrees had difficulty separating the social order from the natural order of school life. Participants generally viewed themselves as more aware and more culturally sensitive than their co-workers.

1.h.ii. Reflections on what I learned from the pilot project and their influence on current research

Interestingly, as the pilot research project was underway, I had the experience of having my father and stepmother live with me for several months while they were waiting for their house to be built. This context allowed for a daily contact with my father that I had not had for many years. He told me stories about his childhood and experiences with the war, immigration to Canada and his feelings and theories about his experiences.

In the middle of the project, I had the opportunity to go to Israel with my family at a time when visits to Israel were highly restricted and under heightened security. While in Israel, I had direct personal experience with the ongoing conflict issues between Israelis and Palestinians. Learning to negotiate between cultural and religious barriers and the experience of being both mistrusted and privileged was very disorienting. An Israeli tour guide who became one of our friends narrowly missed losing his daughter to a bus bombing incident several days after our return to Canada. Although I have many other travel and intercultural experiences, several involving intimate knowledge of violence, it made Canadian complacency towards the plight of the rest of the world all the more difficult for me to bear.

Both the experience of learning about my ancestry and this particular trip's heightening of cultural displacement in a strange land, impacted directly on my own sense of cultural self. It seemed to me that I was experiencing both a micro and macro cultural expansion that was double the impact of the project on my participants. It was at times, very difficult for me not to talk about my own cultural journey during the research meetings, but I perceived my personal experiences as outside of the participant journey, with the possible side effect of silencing or overly influencing participants. I was aware of the power differential in the group and of my greater capacity to influence the study to suit me if I were not careful. This made me question my intent as researcher. Although I initially entered the project with the idea to explore culture with a group of teachers, it became increasingly apparent to me that I wanted to teach the group and engage them in intercultural training that was not part of the research design. I longed to explain theories to them and to draw diagrams of overarching principles, do role-plays and get into the "meat" of white, western privilege. To counteract this, while typing the transcripts I began to measure how much and how long I spoke in comparison to participants and worked consciously to reduce my presence in the process.

What this experience taught me is that I run the risk of being overly passionate about the topic of culture and that this very passion that drives the research may also blind me to what the data could be showing. I realized the importance of leaving time somewhere in the middle of the research for both participants and researcher to process emotions that cultural exploration awakens. The term "cognitive dissonance" seems inadequate to express what we experienced during this research.

My research focus changed after this experience. I was able to connect my questions with a more grounded ability to detect changes in attitude, with methodological concerns such as the careful framing of arts-based inquiry and the comparison of collaborative conversation to arts-based inquiry within a cultural context, with a capacity to consider that the results of the study may not impact practice (which I was not previously willing to consider). I became aware that teachers were careful about published resources they chose but relatively unaware that their own lesson and resource creations for classroom use were cultural artifacts. This resulted in a shift in focus from impact of teacher cultural belief on use of published educational resources to teacher resource creation.

My idea of action research seemed a less appropriate theoretical frame since I had pre-determined the direction of the study with the idea of teacher cultural belief and sustained my strongest researcher role as that of teacher. In action research, participants choose the areas of inquiry that emerge out of their practice. My current study is framed within the tradition of inquiry as group case study rather than action research, although my orientation of self-initiated change of practice and emancipatory action reconciling the tacit with the explicit fall more closely within critical pedagogy perspectives.

Another change has been to move from the idea of teacher belief to the idea of teacher identity. Teacher belief became more and more difficult to frame within cultural contexts. Teacher identity, in addressing the relationship of culture to self, is complex and multifaceted, whereas teacher belief, in keeping the concerns of the other outside of self can remain intact and unproblematic (Sanger, 2001; Spillane, 1999).

Finally, the arts-processes from the pilot study were highly evocative to participants. I decided that this aspect of the research required greater thought, care and sensitivity especially with regard to emotional impact on participants with no art experience. I found analysis of arts data difficult. Again and again I examined the images, poems, letters, journals and scripts and compared them with what participants said about them, wrote notes and compared again with the collaborative conversation transcripts to find underlying patterns.

Even after rigorous verification of data, I doubted my themes and questioned my theoretical extrapolations. I was surprised at the political implications of culture on teaching and also about the associations of cultural production and reproduction with motherhood and female teachers. The issues of agency within bureaucratic settings also took on an importance that was non-existent at the project inception.

I asked myself how different the research process would have been with a more culturally diverse group. Would they have the same concerns as the white teachers did about politics and gender in education? How would they view the controversial cultural resources the white teachers preferred to side-step? Would trust need to be established differently or was there a "teacher culture" that formed points of unity among diverse groups of teachers?

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2. Choosing a Vehicle for the Journey

2.a.i. Methodological orientation for qualitative group case study

I frame my research as a *qualitative group case study* of participant understandings of culture in teaching practice. Case study *is defined by Creswell (1998) as:*

> ...an exploration of a "bounded system" or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context. This bounded system is bounded by time and place, and it is the case being studied – a program, an event, an activity, or individuals (p. 61).

Given my research interests and desire to provide a topic for research exploration, the above descriptive quote best characterizes my study framework. Time and place were clearly specified in the study, the context involved situating the case in a particular setting, there was extensive collection of data from multiple sources (Yin, 1989, cited in Stake, 1995 recommends six), and analysis of the data can be seen as holistic and inductive, moving from the particular to the general through theme and sub-theme codification.

Using the Aoki (2005) list of orientations to curriculum inquiry as a starting point[2], I will place my study within the categories that reveal its fundamental assumptions. Firstly the *root activity* of this study is reflective inquiry into teacher practice through the vehicle of cultural identity. Because it consisted of a small group of four teachers engaged in conversation and arts-discovery around the phenomenon of culture, I would characterize it as *exploratory.* The axial question upon which the study rests is, "In what ways does cultural identity shape and inform the practice of visible minority teachers?" Behind this question lies the *interest* assumption of the study which I identify as both situational/interpretive and critical in orientation. Within the situational/interpretive framework, interest is experientially meaningful, authentic and intersubjective, which informs my interest in identity issues. Since the aim of this study is to improve human conditions, it can be described as having a critical theory assumption.

I created the following diagram to illustrate the links between 1) phenomena that I describe, 2) the questions framing my interpretation of those phenomena and 3) potential uses of the interpreted findings to improve human conditions.

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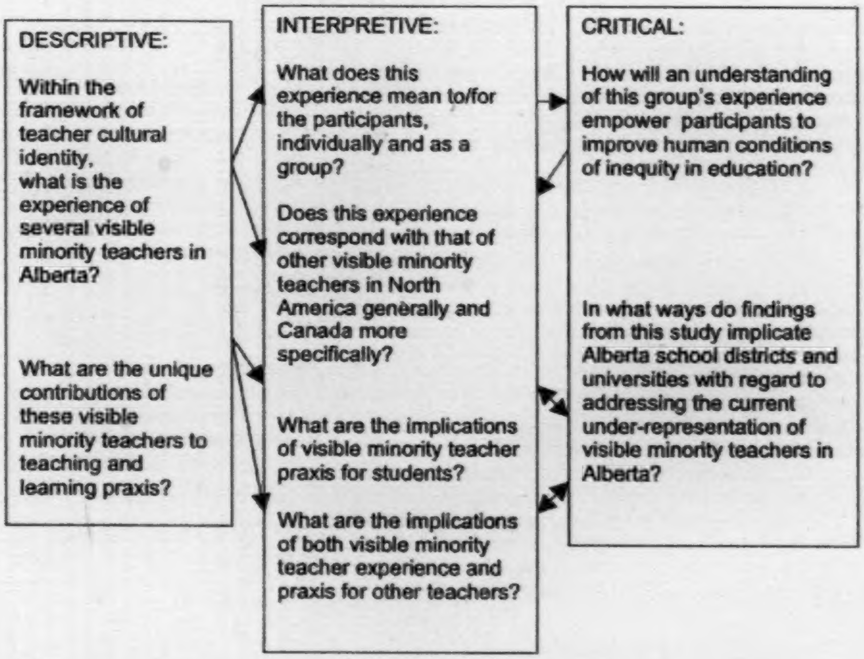
[2] Aoki (2005) created a tri-paradigmatic model of curriculum inquiry based on Jurgen Habermas's seminal work *Knowledge and Human Interest* (1972). It consists of three forms of knowledge : Empirical-Analytic (work), Situational-Interpretive (communication) and Critical (critical). In the first orientation *life* is certain and predictable and *reality* is "out there." For the second, *life* is a mystery and reality is "intersubjectively constituted." The third sees *life* as a condition to be "improved" and *reality* as praxis or a combination of thought and action.

Table 2 Study assumptions

Study orientation diagram



DESCRIPTIVE:

Within the framework of teacher cultural identity, what is the experience of several visible minority teachers in Alberta?

What are the unique contributions of these visible minority teachers to teaching and learning praxis?

INTERPRETIVE:

What does this experience mean to/for the participants, individually and as a group?

Does this experience correspond with that of other visible minority teachers in North America generally and Canada more specifically?

What are the implications of visible minority teacher praxis for students?

What are the implications of both visible minority teacher experience and praxis for other teachers?

CRITICAL:

How will an understanding of this group's experience empower participants to improve human conditions of inequity in education?

In what ways do findings from this study implicate Alberta school districts and universities with regard to addressing the current under-representation of visible minority teachers in Alberta?

My *knowledge assumptions* lie within current qualitative research characteristics as described by Creswell (1998):

> Knowledge is within the meanings people make of it; knowledge is gained through people talking about their meanings; knowledge is laced with personal biases and values; knowledge is written in a personal, up-close way; and knowledge evolves, emerges, and is inextricably tied to the context in which it is studied (p.19).

To the above list I might add that I perceive knowledge to be holistic and multi-faceted including both normative and aesthetic judgments that inform action. The best image to describe my idea of what knowledge is and how it forms is the Medicine Wheel. In the four quadrants of this metaphor are mental, emotional, spiritual and physical clusters set in a nest of self-in-context. Within this paradigm, individual understanding pathways are made possible through relationality with world, subjects and objects/tools. The collective informs the particular and gives cues to the individual as to how much agency he or she has within that collective.

To expand upon the Aoki framework, I would describe the *man/world relationship* of my knowledge paradigm as man-within-world-within-man, meaning that the individual informs his or her sense of self while interacting with others in the world, which in turn influences both self and the world. The *nature of reality* in this world view is that of continuously interacting forms of knowledge influencing each other through the faculty of cycles of reflection and action. *Life* in this context moves inwards and outwards in increasingly informed inter- and intra-relational understandings.

Something not considered explicitly in the above model are the often surprising attachments people have with aspects of their identity; attachments which are less fluid and affect their being and doing in the world. These interacting forms of knowledge do not necessarily result in continuous change of practice across the board. Some practice may be affected by inter- and intra-relational experience, yet others may not.

Ongoing questions informing my research from these assumptions are: How does the experience of the group (and environment) contribute to the self-concept of the individual? In what ways does the individual inform the learning of the group? How central are aesthetic ways of knowing to group learning? How central is collaborative conversation to the individual learning? In what ways do aesthetic and normative knowledge inform each other and the whole? How do culture and morality interact with regard to teaching? At what interstices do resistance and understanding inform each other? What can be learned from that to which we are culturally attached? Can loss of cultural attachment be recreated or regained? How do new attachments emerge and under what conditions? In what ways do cultural attachments and collaborative cultural learning determine teacher cultural identity?

In order to consider these questions I find *qualitative research* the most useful overall concept. Creswell's (1998) definition of qualitative research describes:

> ...an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (p. 15).

His overview of qualitative research characteristics is framed accordingly:

> Writers agree that one undertakes qualitative research in a natural setting where the researcher is an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, analyzes them inductively, focuses on the meaning of participants, and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language (p. 14).

Stake (1995) adds that qualitative studies generally are aimed at the construction of knowledge, seek to understand through in depth exploration of phenomena, honor multiple realities, and provide generalizations and value conclusions. Qualitative research is empathetic; it frames value orientations and intentionality. It is responsive, evolving in design as issues and themes emerge. Qualitative research is holistic and seeks to place the phenomenon within a context that sees the implications of context such as time and space, history, politics, economics, culture, gender, class, social and personal experience and interpretation of that experience.

In qualitative research the researcher seeks to reveal to the reader the critical uniqueness of a particular phenomenon in a search for patterns that add to our understanding of human experience. Within that unfolding is the acknowledgement of the researcher's own bias and experience, which are considered as openly and transparently as possible. Qualitative researchers are reflexive. That is, they understand that the act of studying a phenomenon influences its behavior and that continuous evaluation of researcher influence is necessary to avoid unduly interfering with the process of participants. Researchers keep track of their influence on the setting, work to be conscious of and to bracket their biases and to monitor their own emotional responses while attempting to get close enough to the action to understand what is going on.

> The function of research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it. "Thick description", "experiential understanding," and "multiple realities" are expected in qualitative case studies. Pursuit of complex meaning cannot be just designed in or caught retrospectively…An ongoing interpretive role of the researcher is prominent in qualitative case study (Stake, 1995, p. 43).

This is what I have attempted to do in my current research. The personal and collective experiences of four teachers as they explore their attachments to culture through actively associating culture with teaching practice have resulted in a thick description of multiple realities. The complex realities of their lives engaged the group members in a bounded collective context, but has resonance with others who seek to better understand the role of culture in teaching and learning.

In this study I attempt to generate new understandings about cultural ways of knowing and praxis. Because of the small sample and intimate interpersonal context, findings cannot be used to prove or disprove theory, neither can they be used to make causal connections outside of the boundaries of the study. They can however, be employed to deepen and enrich an understanding of visible minority teacher experiences from four individual perspectives and from the perspective of a small group trying to connect the dots between their similarities and to make known to each other their dis-similarities. In keeping with the tradition of qualitative case study inquiry, the tone of the study is both expressive and persuasive. In the final analysis, I make generalizations based on in-depth exploration of the phenomena in question and express value judgments based on the study's equitable world orientation as previously outlined in Chapter One.

2.a.ii. Data gathering, reporting and analysis procedures

Placing my study within the tradition of case study inquiry brings the issue of triangulation to the fore. Given the constant challenge in qualitative research of bracketing one's own biases and responses, a variety of places from which to view the phenomenon are necessary, in order to ultimately be capable of answering to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirm-ability of final analysis and lessons learned.

My preferred metaphor for capturing the ideal of triangulation in qualitative research, comes from Stake's (1995) comparison with celestial navigation. Let us assume that the researcher as navigator is on a metaphorical research ship in a sea of data. The star positions overhead (methods of triangulation) enable the navigator/researcher to position the ship at different points depending upon the most probable direction given the elements and conditions at the time, and the end destination of the journey. Depending on where the ship is in the world, different constellations will position the research from different vantage points. To recap, these star vantage points, or triangulations:

1) locate the position of the ship (research) at given times
2) open possible directions to take at various points in the research and
3) determine to a certain extent the final (research) destination or place near that destination.

Because case study often involves a multiplicity of data sources to better capture human experience and provide rich description, the matter of which kind of triangulation best suits the study is important to consider in advance. For this context, it seems obvious that *methodological triangulation* will be in constant use since collaborative conversation, arts-informed inquiry, resource creation and personal reflection will all be instruments of data collection. All data sources were used to inform, gauge, direct and position the research throughout the process. As a check to researcher bias I engaged in regular *member checks* where participants provided feedback throughout the study, giving the research a second method of triangulation. Throughout the analysis, I utilize *theory triangulation* since the issues of culture in education are pertinent within critical theory, post-colonialism, intercultural theory, identity theory, antiracism and multiculturalism traditions. Credibility issues of subject perceptions of experience are addressed under upcoming sections on collaborative conversation, arts-based inquiry and limitations of the study.

Reporting consists of entry vignettes into the problem of teacher cultural identity, data collection rationale and findings, a detailed description of the case and themes within it, identification of sub-themes, analysis of theme clusters, interpretations and value implications of central phenomena. These are considered in the light of visible minority teacher world view orientations and pedagogical contributions and the current capacity of schools in which they work to respond to them.

Analysis consists of a process of comparing clusters of data themes with those of similar studies and making theoretical links from the fields of social theory, cultural studies and teacher practice. Analysis is filtered through critical theory questions as per arts-based researcher Weber's (2004) recommendations such as: How was this artifact produced and under what circumstances? How does the data communicate meaning and to whom? What is the researcher's emotional reaction to the data? How do others react to this data? What are the main 'texts' and what are the hidden 'texts'? How are minorities represented? How are gender differences represented? How is the focus group represented and toward what aim? What are the power relationships? What is the relationship between the focus group and the status quo?

2.B. Possible limitations of small group research

2.b.i. Sociocultural influence

In 1954, Sherif wrote: "Small groups cannot be adequately studied independently of their appropriate sociocultural influence. Sociocultural influences, in turn, cannot be studied independently of the motives or "needs" of the group (p. 2). Sherif's statement describes the methodological context for this study. As a primary focus, I looked for participant understandings as sociocultural influences on teaching. I examined the nature of interactions and comments over time to find aspects of their self-reported teaching practice that could provide insights into the role of culture in teaching for visible minority teachers. To test these insights, it would be necessary to move to a second step of sustained classroom observations from which a comparison of self-reported influences and empirically observed influences could be made. That aspect of validation however was not inherent to the research design of this project, which looked to create a space where minority teachers could talk freely together about their practice independently of the constraints of the daily work reality of teaching. Data were produced through naturally occurring talk examined via tripartite comparison: individual comments were juxtaposed against group interactions and revelations of experiences via arts prompts. Advantages of this kind of study for uncovering tacit understandings are discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

I now turn to the second characteristic of small group research to which Sherif (1954) refers, that of the motivating role of group needs and their possible influence on the study findings. In the context of this research, a small group of visible minority teachers from four different national and ethnic contexts came together to explore 1) their experiences with and attachments to culture and, 2) the influences of cultural experience on their teaching practice. All had a common profession but four different experiences within that profession and were not teaching in the same school, neither had they ever taught in the same school. All were reflecting upon their profession to link experience, action and meaning. As the researcher in this study, I also had a common teaching profession and was considering the influence of culture upon my own practice; however, I had no experience of my participants' particular school contexts.

The above description is a different research situation from for example, a school where teachers in the study would have evolved a way of thinking and doing that characterized their "school culture" together with a researcher belonging to that staff who may be unaware of those same school cultural characteristics. In that context of small group research, many inside influences could impact the study findings. Some of these might be: the difficulty of maintaining confidentiality, a tendency of the group to hide knowledge that would make it difficult to continue to work together outside of the research context, possible effects of status differences between group members, undue influence of an individual in the group who dominates decision making outside of the research context, and/or damaging effects of individual disclosures upon the school environment.

Another comparison could be a cultural study where a given group with similar characteristics, is studied by an outsider who attributes meaning to participant actions independently of inside cultural experience or knowledge. In that context, it could be possible to overlook cultural norms that may be invisible to the researcher. Another pitfall could be that of researcher assumptions about rightness or wrongness of cultural behavior based on his or her own cultural norms. Findings examined outside of cultural understandings could be discredited on the grounds that the researcher is too far outside the sociocultural context to be able to adequately speak to it in a meaningful way.

The present study looks to find links to culture and teacher practice with the researcher sharing enough professional understandings to be considered an insider, yet not as an intimate insider as the researcher of the in-school scenario. Because there was no interdependence of group members, they did not “need” each other either outside the research context, neither did they develop a mutual need as might a group undergoing therapy for example. A group need that emerged however, was that of the quest to be heard by others and to compare one’s own experience with that of others. A need that participants each identified individually at the outset of the study was that of a space outside of their usual teaching and life contexts where they could speak without reprisal or repercussions. A potential danger in this context is that relief in letting down one’s guard could have led to over sympathizing of participants with each other. It is possible that a perspective where obstacles identified by individuals were initially attributed to one factor, such as race, for example, would be reinforced by participants who had also experienced racism and were likely to sympathize. If, upon further analysis, it were to be found that these same common obstacles could also be found among white teachers who were new to a school situation, or among immigrants of all races during the first five years of their immigration, the attribution of race alone to the said obstacle would weaken study incisiveness and generalizability.

Further weakening of study credibility could be factors of social comparison and influence. Moscovici and Zavalloni (1969) examined results of several group decision-making studies to reveal a tendency they coined "group polarization". This propensity shows that groups tend to take more extreme positions on issues than individuals. One mechanism by which this phenomenon takes place is that individuals tend to identify with one or more members in the group with higher social status (social comparison) and seek to be like them to increase their own social desirability. Another is more cognitive and involves persuasion of group opinion by individuals with better arguments. Group members weighing the pros and cons of a variety of arguments would move towards the argument with the highest number of persuasive pros. The persuasion may not be accurate or factual, but because of the persuasive argument, it appears attractive to the group. Both these factors are possible threats to the valid interpretation of data from this study.

Upon careful consideration, I am likely to dismiss the first factor because participants in the study were all equally strong personalities with considerable intelligence, charm and social skill. No individual emerged as more socially desirable than another. My presence as researcher, on the other hand, could have implied a degree of social desirability which may have influenced participants. Examination of the data shows, however, that participants felt quite free to argue, to state their disagreement and to challenge each other and me on issues they felt were not fully addressed by individuals. Even if participants had come to some kind of agreement at one meeting, participants frequently stated at later meetings that they had "further thoughts" about the issue and wanted to reiterate, clarify or re-frame their previous comments, indicating the presence of critical readings of individual points of view and group interactions.

One example is the story of one participant's confrontation with a colleague where she ordered a fellow teacher to take her things and get out of the classroom. Although this tactic proved successful for her and illustrated the problem of over-supervision of minority teachers, which all four participants had experienced, one participant in response stated, "That is not me" and explained that she would never respond in that manner. Others agreed that the example demonstrated courage but that they themselves would have a different approach, leading to a discussion about concepts of firmness in interpersonal relations where power inequity was an issue. Given the above and other examples like it, I would conclude that what emerged through the group interaction over a period of five months was a collective learning that could not be reduced to social influence.

On the other hand, it is entirely possible that group members were influenced by each other's persuasive arguments. Of particular note was the influence of immigrant teachers' arguments on the teachers who were born in Canada. It appears to have been the case that those teachers who were born in Canada, having experienced more social ambiguity and identity confusion, were more likely to be influenced in their opinions by those who came from a more authoritative stance of ethnic identity. Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that those participants who were born here, had immigrant parents to whom they deferred and whom they respected and admired.

With respect to group polarization, it is also possible that the group took more extreme positions from their sense of solidarity than they may have taken individually. An example was one participant's final comment about the effects of the research experience on her teaching where she stated that now "nothing can stop me" from using culture in teaching. The others all agreed, in fact there was applause after her statement, indicating agreement to this extreme position unmediated by context or structural constraints. I would however have to be quite naïve to take this comment uttered in a moment of enthusiasm and appreciation, as indicative of group learning.

2.b.ii. Groupthink

Social psychologist Irving Janis (1972) coined the term *groupthink* after studying the reasons why certain groups made decisions that were clearly wrong. He examined the social context that led to decisions made to bomb Pearl Harbor, engage in the Vietnam War, and endorse the Bay of Pigs Invasion. In groupthink, individuals belonging to a given work group, bow to the authority of a leader or strong personality and make morally questionable decisions. Janis documented the conditions that lead to groupthink as:

1. Illusion of invulnerability – Creates excessive optimism that encourages taking extreme risks.
2. Collective rationalization – Members discount warnings and do not reconsider their assumptions.
3. Belief in inherent morality – Members believe in the rightness of their cause and therefore ignore the ethical or moral consequences of their decisions.

4. Stereotyped views of out-groups – Negative views of "enemy" make effective responses to conflict seem unnecessary.
5. Direct pressure on dissenters – Members are under pressure not to express arguments against any of the groups views.
6. Self-censorship – Doubts and deviations from the perceived group consensus are not expressed.
7. Illusion of unanimity - The majority view and judgments are assumed to be unanimous.
8. Self-appointed "mindguards" – Members protect the group and the leader from information that is problematic or contradictory to the group's cohesiveness, view, and/or decisions. (http://www.psysr.org/groupthink%20overview.htm, October 12, 2006)

Firstly, the basic context in which groupthink occurs was not present in this study. The group did not work together in the same company/institution or need to make any decisions from their exploration of culture. Since there was no forum for the group to have to jointly agree on a decision either inside or outside of the research, the base condition for emergence of groupthink was nonexistent.

Secondly, none of the above 8 points were characteristics of the small group context in this study. The most extreme risk that could have been taken by the group was to ignore the context of strengths and opportunities for agency and to focus uniquely on barriers to visible minority teacher participation, which did not occur. There was no collective rationalization to avoid warnings and assumptions since no decision needed to be made. Individuals frequently spoke about their experience of multiracial friendships (to the point of marrying outside their race) which shows they did not see others as enemies to destroy. Doubts and deviations were regularly expressed by all members and since no decisions needed to be rationalized, there was no evidence of self-censorship, illusion of unanimity or opportunities to develop the role of "mind guard".

The only condition that may have some relevance in this research is the first part of the third point, which illustrates how members' belief in the inherent rightness of their cause motivates action that may cause ethical or moral consequences to be ignored. Participants did indeed believe that their voices needed to be heard and that this was necessary to inform better teaching and better learning for themselves and others. They also believed that this right to voice was a moral and ethical obligation on the grounds of recognition and equal dignity. This belief however did not lead them to discount or discredit majority experience or opinion, neither did they engage in derogatory comments towards groups. Again, no decisions were made that could have affected other groups, so the condition of moral righteousness was not a factor in the group dynamics.In sum, although moral and ethical motivation were indeed present in participant comments and group interactions, none of the other contexts or conditions for the emergence of groupthink were present in this study.

2.C. Methodological concerns

2.c.i. First methodological consideration: Collaborative conversation

Inquiry that delves into teachers' personal narratives is common in educational qualitative research (Houtekamer, Chambers, Yamagishi & Good Striker, 1997; Elliot, 1993; Connolly & Clandinin, 1988). Through story, insights into participant sense of self and professional ideals are frequently provided to the researcher over several research encounters. Although teacher narrative process is a characteristic of the methodology of this study, more pertinent is research involving *sustained dialogue* between teachers resulting in mutual influence (Sanger, 2001; Feldman, 1999; Luce-Kaplar,1997; Reason & Hawkins, 1998; Carson, 1986). As teachers engage in deep conversations about practice, they may be both surprised at their capacity to address a complex array of teacher/student concerns and concurrently confronted with their own discrepancies of practice *as they become ready to address them* (Gervais, 2004). Sustained dialogue on issues of mutual concern in the above studies provided forums for educators to thoughtfully consider their practice, life experience and assumptions at deeper levels of interaction than, a simple conversational exchange or a private interview would provide.

The solidarity of the conversation group lays the groundwork for construction of a learning community in which all are participants in the creation of knowledge, each with a particular expertise and contribution to make to the whole. Collaborative conversation as a research methodology, allows teachers to consider the social dynamics of teaching and learning in a complex world from a social research context. Eisner (1981, 1985) states in this regard "form mediates understanding". That being the case, one may assume that collaborative conversation methodology would mediate teacher understanding along interpersonal, social lines, eventually providing insightful data on perceptions, attitudes and behaviors informing teacher cultural identity.

Collaborative conversation in research has been described by Silverman (2001) as the study of *naturally occurring talk,* as contrasted with *researcher-provoked talk* (p. 159). In naturally occurring talk, it is harder for individuals to mask personal tendencies and patterns. Additionally, conversation reveals certain social characteristics that may be indicative of cultural conventions and beliefs, (Garfinkle, 1967) which are particularly useful to this study.

Finally, conversation that is directed towards a mutually agreed upon goal, such as planning a birthday party for a friend, or redesigning an employee benefit plan, takes on characteristics that cannot be attributed to any of the individuals alone but rather through the social construction of knowledge, produces a new entity resulting from the interaction between diverse participants and their unity of thought directed towards that particular goal. An example of this is the work of Houtekamer, Chamers, Yamagishi, and Good Striker (1997) where mutual understanding about women's ways of doing research transcended both individual, cultural and social class boundaries.

> Although you may be inclined to think of conversation as trivial ('merely' talk), it is worth reflecting that conversation is the

> primary medium through which social interaction takes place (Silverman, 2001, p. 160).

According to Feldman (1999), collaborative conversations between teachers who are attempting to improve their practice are a valuable source of data for action research. In a collaborative conversation context, participants have a sense of belonging and camaraderie that solidifies commitment to the research and makes sustainability of change in practice a realizable goal. Participants forget that they are being recorded and are more likely to engage in authentic dialogue. Together, teacher participants focus upon a particular issue and as a result of their interaction "expand their vision...(including) references to life and professional experiences, students' work and other data" (p. 128). Teacher conversation for inquiry centers in the lived experience of teachers and is the actual form of their work, not peripheral to it. Inquiry-directed conversation reveals processes such as anecdote-telling, trying out of ideas, and systematic inquiry (p. 129). Feldman goes on to explain that within the conversation-for-inquiry process, analysis can be made based on quantity, quality, relation and manner.

2.c.ii. Limitations of collaborative conversation methodology

Although the advantage of this methodology lies in its compatibility between that which is being researched and the instrument used to frame that research, disadvantages stem from the tendency of any self-reporter to speak only that which would preserve the speaker's sense of identity as a good person and competent practitioner. The issue of participant need to save face is an issue frequently used to discredit interview or other forms of self-reflective narrative research data (Eisner, 1981). Carson and Johnston (2000), reveal how participant need to keep identity boundaries intact covered beliefs participants perceived to be dangerous to identity. This means that research involving speaking participants, must take into consideration the ever-present possibility that the need to save face could cover or color data.

From another context, Winston (1999) in his research with children and moral education makes a strong case to support the difficulty of measuring attitudinal and behavioral changes in children's moral development even in the "make believe" context of process drama. Not only do children want to preserve their sense of self as a "good" person, they also want to please the adults who work with them and may say what they believe the researcher/teacher wants to hear rather than what they really believe.

For teachers, the implications of uncovering potentially "dangerous" knowledge that may reveal for example the existence of teacher attitudes partially responsible for student failure, are significant considerations that the methodology of collaborative conversation alone may not be capable of addressing.

2.c.iii. Second methodological consideration: Arts-based research (ABR)

A second methodological consideration that has not been widely explored in teacher identity research for tapping into tacit thought is arts-based inquiry. Arts-based research is a relatively recent arrival to the Academy. Although Berk (1980) is considered the first educational researcher to reconstruct the life of a student in story form, arts-based research is known primarily through the work of Elliot Eisner and Tom Barone. Together they spearheaded the arts-based inquiry movement, and defined arts-based research through both their writing and their roles in establishing the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Institute on Arts-based Qualitative Research and the Arts-based Special Interest Group (Butler-Kisber, 2002).

Eisner and Barone explain that researchers use arts inquiry for "a purpose often associated with artistic activity: arts-based research is meant to enhance perspectives pertaining to certain human activities" (Barone and Eisner, 2004, p.1), and defined by the presence of certain design elements that infuse the inquiry process and the research "text" (Ibid, p. 2). These elements are summarized by Butler-Kisber (2002) as:

- The creation of a virtual reality
- The presence of ambiguity
- The use of expressive language
- The use of contexualized and vernacular language
- The promotion of empathic understanding
- The presence of aesthetic form (p. 230).

ABR has a predisposition towards "uncovering and expressing alternate (and sometimes conflicting) interpretations of the phenomena under scrutiny" (Barone, 2001, p. 24) as contrasted with the aims of traditional scientific research that seeks a more certain truth from an authoritative source. ABR has emerged out of dissatisfaction with the use of word and number to express experiences and concepts that do not fit within conventional scientific parameters. McLeod (1987) wrote that knowledge has been considered the domain of science, and understanding in the scientific paradigm arises from objective and quantifiable inquiry, systematic discovery and controllable variables.

According to McLeod (1987) and Eisner (1993, cited in Norris, 1997), however, human thought is much more multifaceted and complex than that which can be expressed through a certain kind of language or a particular use of number. It manifests itself in various ways in addition to word and number, most obviously through image, gesture and sound (McLeod, 1987). Furthermore, writes McLeod, "no knowledge takes unless the imagination is committed. If there is no hook into the imagination, knowledge will not take, it will pass through" (McLeod, 1987, p. 11). Imagination cannot be engaged without some evoking of the senses or reference to experience. Hence, imagination, sense perception and experience, become intimately associated with knowledge (Bereiter, 2002; Caine and Caine, 1997), all three unthinkable without some kind of emotional response woven throughout (Gauvain, 2001; Lafortune & St-Pierre, 1998).

The rationale for including arts-based representation in qualitative research is the same rationale for using collaborative conversation: *form mediates understanding.*

> Different forms can qualitatively change how we understand phenomena... As well, these non-traditional forms help disrupt the hegemony inherent in traditional texts and evoke emotional responses that bring the reader/viewer closer to the work,

> permitting otherwise silenced voices to be heard… (Butler-Kisber, 2002, p. 230).

Arts-based researchers might argue that to theorize without the benefit of the above manifestations of human thought and experience, is firstly to narrowly limit the advancement of knowledge and secondly to engage in reification. Holistic research would take into consideration all aspects of human experience, especially in research that concerns itself with those most human of experiences: teaching, learning and living with others. Within the arts-based paradigm, knowledge is constructed in a personal and social relationship with the world characterized by creativity in both the making and the transfer of understanding to action.

Diamond and Mullen (1999) state:

> Through raising conscious awareness of self-practice, different versions of teacher effectiveness can be stretched and improved in self-chosen ways…We assemble, construct, and reconstruct a teacher self as we build and renovate any other idea…and within supportive, synergistic contexts provided by others (pp. 66,67).

They list some arts-based teacher identity activities as: teacher self-characterizations, contrasting different aspects of teacher self; mapping teaching career development literarily and visually through journals, diaries, timelines, image-based organizational schemata, creating metaphors of teaching and inquiry and autobiographies since,

> Teachers learn best, as we all do, "through using their own experience through active involvement and through thinking about and becoming articulate about what they have learned" (Diamond & Mullen citing Lieberman, 1995, p. 68).

The benefits to the participants with regard to unveiling tacit cultural knowledge and engagement in improved practice, along with the importance of the arts in building researcher responsiveness are significant reasons for including arts-based inquiry in research methodology. Surely creativity is an important component of research and connected with the arts would tend to improve researcher capacity to generate themes, see patterns and develop concepts. Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) state:

> Research is only as good as the investigator. It is the researcher's creativity, sensitivity, flexibility and skill in using the verification strategies that determines the reliability and validity of the evolving study (p. 5).

2.c.iv. Limitations of arts-based research

This having been said, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Researchers who have no formal training in the arts and attempt to dabble in a little arts-based inquiry risk a weak research design and poor understanding of the data with its implication for participants. They court the possibility of both bad research and bad art. Visual art professor Mike Emme (personal communication, November 2003) voiced his concern that researchers with no understanding of collage, for example, use it for their research in naïve and ineffective ways, then extrapolate on findings that are not only imagined and speculative within their own disciplines, but laughable as art forms. Another example of the difficulty with combining research and art is explained by drama professor Joe Norris (2000). He expresses, by way of example, his concern about researchers using the term Readers' Theatre for uninformed drama-based research that has no relation to Readers' Theatre at all. He writes, "My current stance is that other forms should: 1) be framed as research in some manner, 2) be substantive as traditional forms, 3) and be exemplars in the form chosen, that is, they should be good novels, artist portfolios and scripts" (p. 17).

Barone and Eisner (2004), clarify further the criteria for "good" arts-based research as:

It must have an illuminating effect, enabling the reader to notice what the researcher through his/her work claims is there. This is also referred to as referential adequacy (or: the proof of the pudding is in its tasting). It must have generative qualities; that is to say, promote new questions allowing new insights into a given phenomenon. It should be incisive, or focus tightly on salient issues and questions that get to the heart of experience. It must be generalizable, or be capable of moving from the particular to the general, making inferences from one situation that apply to others, enabling relevancy to a variety of contexts. The authors are quick to add however that if current arts-based research does not meet all of the criteria all of the time, it is likely due to the experimental nature of this new kind of thinking combined with lack of recognizable exemplars that are yet to evolve in the field.

2.c.v. Ethical considerations of arts-based research

Because the arts are evocative, personal problems may arise that derail the research or involve the researcher and participants in psychological quandaries they may be unqualified to address. There are certainly ethical issues involved in delving into the private and personal in a manner that leaves the participant no cover from exposure of knowledge that may be damaging to his/her career or life. Issues arising out of arts-based issues are beginning to emerge (Conrad, 2004; Saldaña, 1998), especially with the increased use of drama for at-risk youth, bully prevention and HIV/AIDS awareness (Elliott, Gruer, Farrow, Henderson & Cowan, 1996).

One example of ethical issues arising in arts-based research is Willis's (2002) experiment with attempting to bridge cultural gaps through direct culturally relevant experience and interaction between Aboriginal Australians and non-Aboriginal service providers. In the beginning of the paper, the researcher reveals his background as a past missionary and hopes to address, through aesthetic and cultural experiences with Aborigines, some of the ills of colonization through his research. In the end, it appears questionable whether the social injustice in question can be addressed artistically without ongoing reference to systems of power affecting both the researched and the researcher.

In response, I believe researchers engaging or planning to engage in arts-based inquiry, or any other kind of inquiry for that matter, must do their homework in firstly honestly assessing the background they bring to the research and how this background frames and shapes that research. Secondly, researchers need to clarify and articulate the relationship of the academic and the aesthetic to the social and the ethical by asking the question "What is the possible impact of this research on the lives of the participants?" Qualitative research design must incorporate interpersonal frameworks that ensure protection of privacy and reduce possibilities of loss of face by incorporating a moral stance of mutual respect, kindness, care and responsibility of researcher and participants towards each other's mutual good.

The option to opt out of anything one feels uncomfortable with, choice, valuing and encouraging diversity, respecting unfamiliar cultural contexts, the examination of power dynamics that emerge in the research along with facilitator skill to keep the research project unified and focused on the mutual goals, can all help in this regard. Finally, regular review of the data from both a process and product perspective and verification of data correctness with participants, can help build an atmosphere of community trust that is necessary for qualitative research in any form.

2.c.vi. Summary of methodological limitations

This chapter on methodology explained how I have framed the study of a small group of visible minority teachers to engage them in bringing tacit understandings of culture and cultural experience to the level of the explicit. It demonstrated my understanding of and commitment to qualitative research, which endeavors to more deeply understand rather than to prove or disprove a given phenomenon. From there I revealed my knowledge assumptions and explained both the exploratory, expressive nature of the study, general limitations of small group research and the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative conversation and arts-based inquiry.

Limitations of small group research were explained as: 1)the tendencies of small groups to make greater claims and take higher risks than they would individually and, 2) to align their comments with those who had either greater social desirability or capacity to influence through strength of argument. Both these considerations were considered and discussed. The possibility that groupthink may also have limited the study was considered and dismissed given the absence of foundational groupthink conditions.

Methodological limitations with regard to collaborative conversation were outlined as having to do with participants' fear of losing face, desire to please the researcher or say what they think the researcher wants to hear. This limitation is particularly important in a cultural context where it may be considered rude to disagree with a person in authority (such as the researcher) or to question others in a group in such wise as to cause them to be embarrassed or discredited. Equally important is the capacity of participants from oral culture traditions to pick up a wide range of body language and vocal intonation that could silence them should they perceive the researcher to be unresponsive or judgmental in any way. Because I was aware of these limitations prior to embarking on the research, I consciously chose arts-based inquiry as a way to counterbalance limitations of collaborative conversation methodology.

Arts-based research has the capacity to generate authentic emotional and world view responses from individuals that cannot be covered up as they would be in collaborative conversation methodology. It allows participants to discover an arts process together, allowing otherwise hidden attitudes to surface as participants create together in a given arts form. On the other hand, the evocative quality of arts engagement has the capacity to bring the research to a place of personal vulnerability that would be more appropriate for therapy than for research. Arts-based inquiry may also be completely ineffective if the researcher is not an accomplished arts practitioner to begin with. For the latter condition, as I have extensive training and experience in music, drama and visual and literary arts, as well as a repertoire of arts teaching strategies from my years as a teacher of those subjects, the limitation is not significant. I addressed the former criteria through counterbalancing of art inquiry with collaborative conversation. The group conversation context neutralized any strong emotions or memories that may have been awakened through arts inquiry. Participants also did not spend sufficient time with any arts prompts to become deeply engaged as they might in for example, a drama course where the entire focus would be on drama. The combination of limited arts inquiry with collaborative conversation kept the study parameters firmly in the area of research.

2.c.v. Participant credibility

Finally, with all qualitative research there is the problem of participant credibility. Upon what grounds does one accept, accept with limitation, or reject participant narrative, statements and explanations? Can it be automatically assumed that participants are speaking in a manner that genuinely reflects their lived experience? Where are the possible traps posed by secondary gains in methodology that uses dialogue as a primary data source?

In response to the first and second questions, I began from the premise that participant intent and experience would be revealed via the evocative strategies of combined collaborative conversation and arts-inquiry as previously explained. In contrast to other qualitative methodologies, it is not possible to "hide" in arts inquiry because the body cannot "not have" a physiological and emotional response. For example, no matter how much one understands cognitively that a fictional tale is imaginary, one cannot stop one's emotional response to the story. One may try to hide the intensity of the response, attempt to explain it and analyze it later, but in the actual moment, the emotional response is real. Who am I to question the validity of a participant's emotional response under these conditions? I cannot say "You are wrong to feel sad" to a person who is remembering the experience of being a refugee. Neither could I question a participant's angry response to the memory of a colleague's behavior. Whether or not the anger was justified in response to the behavior, the memory of that incident and the anger's effect on the participant is real.

The participant's perception may be flawed and the understandings that produced the emotion may be wrong or misplaced, but this does not undermine the reality of the participant's emotion to a given context at the time. In this research, I used participant moments of authentic emotional response to highlight practice related issues that were evocative of joy, frustration, exasperation, pain or any other emotion to that participant. I consciously set the conditions for safe and contained emotional responses and documented them with their narrative associations as they arose, reducing the possibility of face saving and researcher pleasing behaviors and increasing propensity for authentic and credible exploration. During interpretation and analysis, I reviewed the responses, interactions and contexts in the light of their frequency, intensity and contextual parameters prior to making any inferences or explanations.

With regard to the third question, there were no conditions for obvious secondary gain in this research. Participants did not receive any recompense for their time and had no possibility of profiting materially from the research. They came together for the project in spite of the fact that it was difficult for them and that it required sacrifices in other areas of their lives, because they believed that this research was meaningful. In this respect, one possible gain for participants would be the benifit of professional development mentioned by Meiers and Bevis (2005) wherein teachers "chosen" for professional development demonstrated higher levels of professional confidence than colleagues not participating in the professional development because they felt recognized and validated.

Obvious external limitations of the study are the small sample and the fact that participants met in my home where the atmosphere is conducive to talking about cultural issues from the multi-ethnic décor and hospitality alone. One additional consideration is that three of the participants were from African countries, which is likely to influence both arts responses and oral culture findings. Another is that three of the four participants were female. Future studies would need to consider participants from a wider range of national and ethnic heritage and a more equitable balance of males and females to render findings more generalizable.

3.A. An overview of Race, Ethnicity and Culture in the Canadian context of Canadian Teacher Identity

Isajiw (1999) defines race as "a category of physical characteristics possessed by people…race is a category devised by outsiders, including scholars, that places persons with similar biological characteristics into a group" (p. 21). There is a long history of scientists and anthropologists of colonizing countries from 18th century botanist Carolus Linnaeus onwards trying to understand the world by labeling and categorizing difference. Garn in 1971 (cited in Isajiw 1999) offered a categorization of race based on geographic areas, namely: Amerindians, Polynesians, Micronesians, Melanesian-Papuans, Australian Aboriginees, Asiatics, Indians, Europeans and Africans. These categories have become less and less viable as individual variations within each category ranging from skin color to shape and size of noses makes it harder to keep within the narrow confines of each category. Races were seen to have particular traits and value judgments were placed on the desirability of various racial characteristics or the intellectual capacity of various racial groups. Although some scientists still hold to the view that there are ways to define racial hierarchy (for example Gottfredson, 1998), attempts to prove that some races are superior to others have been discredited and disproved (Zack, 1994; Tudorov, 1993; Montagu, 1964).

With regard to identity based on race, it has been found that people do not necessarily identify with each other because they have the same skin color, any more than would people sharing the same size of feet. There are closer connections between people of similar cognitive achievement, political affiliations and socio-economics, than race for example (Murray, 1994 cited in Isajiw, 1999). Isajiw writes that "persons identify with their racial characteristics only as a response to being categorized and excluded by outsiders, especially if the outsiders are in a dominant position…What is defined as real by the dominant group becomes real in its consequences for the subordinate group" (p. 22).

Race categories then, although having no biological basis nonetheless have very real social consequences (Dei, 1996). Testimonies to these social consequences are voiced in anguished tones by well-known Canadian authors such as Carl James, Arun Mukherjee and Pui Yee Beryl Tsang (James & Shadd, 2001), with topics ranging from "…but I've never had a Black teacher before" to "how will I survive as a brown person in the Academy?" to "How do I get over the fact that I married a white man?"

In Canada, race has had social and economic implications since the Europeans and Aboriginal peoples first met. Cameron (2004) writes:

> Canada has only recently – within the last 35 years or so – considered itself a multicultural society…In fact, Canada began nationhood with a decidedly racist ideology. Doctors, journalists, philosophers, politicians, and poets alike speculated

> widely in the 50 years between Confederation and the First World War that Canada's northern environment was only suited to (and actually enhanced) the white northern races (such as Germans, Scandinavians, and British) and was inimical to the southern races (such as Italians, Greeks and Poles). As for what we today call "visible minorities," they would have no chance whatsoever of thriving in such a climate…" (p. xvi).

Cameron's book documents the first official government documents intended to marginalize Aboriginal peoples and keep darker skinned immigrants out of Canada. It then proceeds to give voice to excluded peoples' experiences and feelings of marginalization through prose, poetry, letters and drama. While reading these life story accounts, it becomes clear that Canada is much more than a place where "two solidarities", namely the French and the British, moved into Aboriginal lands and built an empire. Das (2002) calls this new emerging sense of identity from the intermingling of a plurality of cultural experiences "the Third Solitude":

> "…a new world is taking shape: one in which the best and worst of the borderless world mingle; in cities that from their very foundation were shaped by a meeting of cultures. This is where the new sense of being Canadian is taking shape" (p. 103).

If identity then, is less based on race than social experience, one is obliged to look elsewhere for common bonds between people that define their sense of who they are. Ethnicity, language, religion and culture provide more arenas for understanding belonging and identity to which we can look for some of these social spaces. Isajiw (1999) defines ethnicity as involuntary membership in a social group where most members are "recruited at birth" (p. 18). Involuntary membership refers to a category of differentiation that one had no control over. For example, I did not choose to be born in the place where I was born, with the skin color or gender that I happen to be, or to learn the language that happened to surround me at birth. These are categories of involuntary membership. Within this place and people where I was born, a socialization process took place that continues to associate me with these people and with whom I must necessarily identify whether to a greater or lesser degree. The ethnic identification process becomes more complex however when there are multiple spaces of ethnicity at birth; one may identify with both a Caribbean father and a Cree mother and have ethnic characteristics of both.

Ethnicity alone, however, cannot explain the kinds of similar social understandings, norms and behaviors of any given group. Religious affiliation or religious influence over generations also flavors the ways in which people interact and the expectations they have of each other. A country that is predominantly Muslim will have different understandings of the world than a predominantly Christian or Buddhist country for example. On the other hand religion and ethnicity together still do not account for different kinds of musical expression, variations in cooking, ways to greet people or to apply for a job or attitudes towards gender relations and child rearing practices. These kinds of social interactions and life skill norms are part and parcel of culture, which develops ways of doing things that become normalized in any given group. It is also culture that makes for civil society and the building of institutions. When most of the institutions in a given society are controlled by one segment of that society, the norms and ways of looking at the world of that particular segment, make it the "dominant" culture.

Ethnicity, religion and culture have been combined with infinite variation throughout the world and defined in multifarious ways. As a result, Isajiw (1999) explains:

> We can now define ethnic group as referring to an involuntary, community-type group of persons who share the same distinct culture or who are descendants of those who have shared a distinct culture and who identify with their ancestors, or their culture or group (p. 19).

There are primary and secondary ethnic groups. For example, Indians born in India (historical complexities aside for the moment) could be considered a primary ethnic group. When numbers of Indians move to Kenya to establish businesses there, the group that emerges could be considered a secondary ethnic group. Descendents of the Indian/Kenyans who immigrated to Canada, have had yet another ethnic adaptation to make. Within these groupings are weaker or stronger degrees of structural differentiation. The weaker the ties, the more likely the secondary ethnic group is to be a folk community, usually gathered around a religious calendar and place, with small traditions of custom, song and proverb. The stronger the structural ties, the more the development of political, cultural and educational institutions. As strong structural ties develop, a folk culture becomes a national culture (Redfield, 1956 in Isajiw, 1999).

Trimble and Dickson (in press), write that ethnicity is increasingly becoming symbolic in heavily multicultural societies where attachments to primary ethnic group become specific to distinctive rituals and situational ethnicity. They see the influence of ethnicity as situating oneself historically and identification with artifacts and symbols.

> More and more it appears that North Americans are realizing that their biological ancestors wittingly and unwittingly influence their lives. To gain some understanding and perhaps to add structure and meaning, many are searching their attics for long lost records describing their social histories. And from the discoveries one constructs a "symbolic identity" (p. 4).

In Canada we have a particular situation where many folk cultures are simultaneously developing secular institutions but not developing a separate national community; rather a multinational, multiethnic community is forming as Satya Das (2002) has intimated earlier in this chapter. Some ethnocultural groups have become established in places in Canada and are considered older ethnic communities, whereas other groups are younger with a shorter establishment history in Canada, which can vary across the country. The Chinese in Vancouver could be considered an older, established community whereas in Toronto, they are younger. Haitians in Eastern Canada are older but in Alberta, are a relatively young and numerically small group (taken from several issues of journals Canadian Issues/Thèmes canadiens and Canadian Diversity/Diversité canadienne, 2000-2005). When we add to this the considerations of inter-racial and inter-religious marriages, national culture in Canada becomes very hard to define. It remains, nonetheless the case, that most of the secular institutions in Canada are controlled by the "two solidarities" of the first colonizers; the British and the French, making the dominant culture predominantly flavored by Western/European world views and norms; a position that becomes particularly problematic for the visible minority teachers in this study as will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

By way of illustration, the findings of a study by Fong and Gulia (2000) in examining racial neighborhood change patterns in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal may provide a context within which challenges experienced by this study's visible minorities teachers can be understood. Fong and Gulia (2000), classified the statistically significant Canadian populations studied as Charter (French or British descendants), European, Asian or Black. The three Canadian metropolis areas studied showed that Asians between the years of 1986-1991 tended to move to neighborhoods where there were more European immigrants and descendants, rather than choosing to live in ethnic enclaves.

The presence of Asians in neighborhoods was followed by a movement of Blacks. In predominantly European neighborhoods where Asians and Blacks began moving in, the neighborhoods became increasingly diverse and remained that way over the period studied. In predominantly Charter neighborhoods however, when the population of Asians and Europeans increased to 1%, Charter populations exited the neighborhoods at a rate of between 10-17%. When the Black population increased to 1%, Charter populations exited their neighborhoods at a rate of 73%. Conclusions of the authors are that Blacks are not welcomed by Charter groups in particular, and that Charter populations are more resistant to integration by any other group, irrespective of race.

Krotki (1997) in studying the characteristics of interethnic marriages in Canada, found that the French of Quebec were the least likely to intermarry. In 1991, interethnic marriages consisted of 7% in Quebec overall, 11% in Montreal, 50% in Ottawa-Hull, 169% in Ontario overall, 310% in Edmonton, 418% in Calgary. Three of the participants in my study taught in either Francophone or French Immersion schools where there are high populations of French Charter teachers.

Within this interwoven context of race, religion, and ethnicity, I turn now to the topic of culture. Mukherjee (1991) writes:

> Since the advent of humanity, individuals in group formation have experimented with themselves to devise ways and means for the realization of four cardinal values for humankind: survival of the species, security in the life span of individuals, material prosperity for ensuring survival and security and for continual expansion for the scope of wholesome living, and mental progress for unfolding the potential for each and every individual…this valuation has been endemic to all configurations of human society identified by their place, time, and people characteristics (p. 50).

He explains that the valuation of humankind in any kind of human social patterning becomes a complex and organic system of interdependent variables including “knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man" (Mukherjee, 1991, p. 51) through collective learning and experience. This description shows how complex and multifaceted is the role of culture in human experience and understanding. Culture involves the development of a body of knowledge used to interpret behavior, forms of communication and mutually understood rules for living. It encompasses both the process of developing ways to live together collectively (subjective role of culture) and products which reflect aspects of this process (objective role of culture). Because of the lived day-to-day normalcy of cultural processes, much of culture is tacit and only rises to individual consciousness when confronted with difference.

Hall (1991 cited in Bennett, 1998) writes:

> Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough, what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants (p. 59).

Phillips (1990, cited in Roopnarine and Johnson, 2005) affirm:

> "Culture is a process which empowers people to function" (Phillips, 1990, p. 2). Through culture "children gain a sense of identity, a feeling of belonging, a notion of what is important in life, what is right and wrong, how to care for themselves and others, and what to celebrate, eat and wear" (Cortez, 1996, p. ix). They gain the power to influence their environment and to have an impact on the world (Phillips, 1988) (pp. 128-129).

Culture, then, can be seen as an umbrella concept under which many aspects of identity attachments can be understood. The social implications of racialized experience can be viewed through the lens of culture as can both primary and secondary ethnicity, linguistic and religious affiliations. Within the context of culture, majority, minority and alternative group patterns can be explored, family groupings and tribes discussed and morals, norms and esthetics considered as part and parcel of identity formation. The implications of individual and small group agency and the analysis of institutional structures can be taken into consideration under the banner of culture, allowing for creativity of human interaction and consideration of new spaces for resolution of conflict to emerge.

Hogg (2005) writes that culture as both micro and macro can be conceptualized in ways that apply across spectrums of groups ranging from three members to nations to aspects of international culture.

> Culture, at the global level, certainly impacts how people interact and represent themselves and, therefore, how small groups operate…Culture can, however, also be analyzed at a more microsocial level: Different groups have different cultures, different ways of thinking, acting, and relating to and among one another (p. 148).

Griffith (2000) writes that in a world of increasing contact between cultures there are the possibilities of friction, mutual exchange, adaptation and creativity.

> ...indeed it is quite possible that cultural exchange is one of the roots, perhaps the principal root of global dynamism and the ultimate source of human creativity, human development and economic growth (p. 31-32).

Within the context of this study, culture as multifaceted collective experience in a variety of contexts, is a useful lens through which the sense of personal and professional identity of four Canadian visible minority teachers can be explored. Culture provides a framework with enough flexibility to move back and forth between participant expression spanning the range of global citizenship, school norms, gendered response, immigrant settlement issues, experiences of racism and mixtures of Afro-centric religious beliefs with Christianity, without succumbing to polarization and simplification.

3.a.i. Effects of race, ethnicity and culture on visible minority teacher identity

The social experience of racialization in the context of culture, has been studied as an important determinant of identity formation (McGregor & Ungerleider, 2004; Sefa-Dei, 2003; Solomon & Razai-Rashti, 2001; Tator & Henry, 2000; Mohanty, 1997; Fleras & Elliott, 1996/1992). Ghosh and Abdi (2005) write that identity develops differently dependent upon whether one is in the dominant or minority culture.

> For visible minorities, the apparent distinction in color and/or culture produces a sense of discomfort and forces them to

> define themselves, to say who they are and what constitutes their identity. This self-definition produces conflict in identity formation, because traditions are being reconstructed through fragmentation. Ethnic identity changes, and the evolution of this identity is part of the democratic process in postmodern, mulitcultural societies…Identity crisis is a common problem because ethnic and national identity are treated as conflicting. (p. 71).

This sense of identity crisis and how it developes from an early age is portrayed in James and Shadd's (2001) collection of Canadian narratives, an example of which I cite below:

> My "Excuse me, sir, can I have three cents' worth of bubble gum?" was usually met with a hostile glare or, worse yet, an indifference that negated my existence. At seven years old, I couldn't understand why my three cents wasn't as valuable as that of my friends, who always seemed able to get the owner's attention. I most often resorted to having my friends buy my candy for me from this same man who taught me that in some way I was less valuable and valued than my peers. I'm not talking now about the kid-versus-adults kind of invisiblity. Kids are used to being ignored by store owners when a more lucrative transaction with an adult can be made. I'm talking about the kind of invisibility that set me apart from other kids in my own age group, an invisibility that sapped my fragile self-esteem and gave rise to self-doubt (p. 61).

In this narrative, the author Stan Isoki (James and Shadd, 2001) was perceived of as being visibly different which caused others to ignore him, effectively placing him in the precarious position of having to negotiate simultaneously visiblity and invisible because of his race.

If we compare the above statement with the following statement of a white teacher candidate about what she would bring into the classroom, the different identity understandings depending upon one's experience with race and place in the power heirarchy become more obvious:

> I feel the most comfortable with the way that I've been taught and brought up, and the way that I have been taught and brought up is from an European perspective...and that's what I am going to largely bring into the classroom" (Solomon & Rezai-Rashti, 2001, p. 19).

In the first statement, difference of color and culture, conflict, change and fragmentation seem to be the most defining characteristics of minority identity which is seen to be in crisis, whereas the complete certaintly of the second statement is based on "what I am comfortable with" that is considered right and true and worth taking into the public sphere of the classroom to be propogated and reproduced.

Nasir and Saxe (2003), in describing the decision of minorities to pursue an academic career, point to the dilemma that visible minority university students have about whether to choose between strong positive association with an ethnic identity or "lose" their race and culture to associate more strongly with academics. In one dialogue excerpt, a school administrator chides a group of Black domino players for choosing to be "out here getting a cultural experience" instead of studying. When the administrator leaves the group, one of the players tells the others that once they get into their second or third year of university, the pressure to leave cultural practice will get much stronger. The visible minority student thus attempts to continuously straddle cultural status with academic (which comes to be seen as white) status.

Phinney's study (1989) explored ethnic identity awareness of 91 Los Angeles adolescents between the ages of 15-17 via individual interview methodology. Stages of ethnic identity were identified ranging from awareness of difference, to internalized negative stereotypes, to sense of pride and comfort across ethnic groups. She found that visible minority participants in all racialized groups were spread across all stages of awareness with the older participants generally achieving higher levels of ethnic pride and integration than the younger ones. White participants however did not show evidence of ethnic identity irrespective of their social circumstances.

> It appears that these youth, regardless of the specific group, face a similar need to deal with the fact of their membership in an ethnic minority group in a predominantly White society, as suggested by Tajfel (1978). In contrast, the White students, even in settings where they were in the minority, did not show evidence of these stages and were freqeuntly unaware of their own ethnicity...(p. 45).

Interestingly, Phinney (1989) found that the group with the most persistent in-group negative attitudes were Asians, who in spite of academic success and positive stereotyping by mainstream Americans, were seen to have less in-group social support or ethnic pride mechanisms than Blacks or Hispanics. Finally, Phinney (1989) found positive correlates between achieved or integrated ethnic identity with sense of mastery, satisfying social and peer relationships and harmonious family relationships. These findings are important for teachers because they have implications for students of all races with regard to social inclusion and social integration independent of academic success.

Barty (2003) shows in her study of Alberta teachers that avoiding controversy or reluctance to show a plurality of historic experience also accompanied teachers' reluctance to work with primary sources even when they knew it would be highly beneficial to their students. She refers to Miller Marsh's work (2002, cited in Barty, 2004) in stating that "teacher identity is a process of social negotiation, strongly shaped by our experiences as students and deepy rooted in historical and contemporary constructs of power" (p. 5). Towards the end of the article, Barty proposes that a teacher's lack of motivation to see or show perspectives other than one's own appears to be rooted in a corresponding moral inability to see social justice as central to teaching, likely based on lack of experience with the receiving end of injustice.

In support of Barty's conclusions, studies that included visible minority pre or in-service teachers, found that those who had not experienced marginality were less likely to embrace a social justice teaching perspective. Findings also showed that white teachers tended to have an inflated sense of themselves as competent in dealing with issues of diversity in teaching, whereas their visible minority colleagues, who had experienced the social fall-out of racial and cultural misunderstandings, were ambiguous as to their capacity to deal with those same ramifications in the classroom (McGregor & Ungerleider, 2004; Dee & Henkin, 2002; Solomon & Rezai-Rashti, 2001). Studies that examined attitudes of either only visible minority teachers or a majority of visible minority teachers, highlighted the high degree of social justice/moral responsibility that informed their participants' pedagogy (Madsen & Mabokela, 2005; Khalema, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Having experienced first hand the injustice of racism, prejudice and marginalization, visible minority teacher candidates and in-service teachers in the above studies, saw their role as much more political, fraught with moral implications and necessarily controversial than did their white colleagues.

Specific focus on racial identity in teacher preparation, showed conflicting needs of both white and visible minority candidates. In the Solomon & Rezai-Rashti (2001) study, the concerns of visible minority teacher candidates were rarely voiced by visible minority candidates. It was noted however, that when provided with a forum to comment, those same candidates were quite insightful in their analysis about where inequities in education existed. One Black candidate explained:

> The main thing that sticks out for me for antiracist education is that all cultural groups in Canada are not on the same level

> playing field and it is so evident when you go into inner-city schools and see the resources that they have and what they are exposed to (p. 31).

Another commented:

> I would look at the issue of power in terms of the dominant society and how they achieved it and how it's maintained and then examine the idea of surrounding cultures and how direct and indirect practices of the dominant culture might overtly or covertly hold back or supress their ethnicity, race, gender (p. 31).

Contrastingly, a white candidate wrote:

> I think antiracist education just means respect. If you don't have respect you can't teach antiracist education. The way I practice it is, I don't believe in "put-downs" and a lot of it is kids just making comments about difference. I hate using the word different (p. 30).

Whereas the first two explanations spoke directly to power, inequity and social analysis, drawing attention to the consequences of racism in education and how to overcome them, the latter comment considered race only within the more nebulous term of individual respect and attempted to reduce difference by avoiding it. No power or equity issues were mentioned.

3.a.ii. Understanding culture: developments in cultural studies

Dimmrock and Walker (2002) see culture as "recognition of common values and norms that bind groups of people together, but which at the same time distinguish them from other groups" (p. 396). Even so they state that culture is perceived differently by societal cultures in which difference and divergence are emphasized, than by policy makers and governments who emphasize convergence and similarity. Examples at both ends of the scale would be Geert Hofstede's (1991) organizing schemata for understanding cultural difference within five general themes common to all (power distance, individual vs. collective, masculine vs. feminine, uncertainty avoidance and long-term vs. short-term orientation) and Homi Bhabha's work (1996) of continously differentiating articulated worlds, intersecting temporarily through transient space in moments of fluid attachment. Whereas Hofstede would represent corporations, governments and multinational companies through their cross-cultural experiences Bhabha may be seen as more located within a fragmentation (if indeed such a concept is possible) of what happens when power, oppression and other social forces collude or collide.

A further delving into the constructs of culture by Bhabha explores the distinction between cultural diversity and cultural difference. Bhabha (1996) writes that cultures are only constituted in relation to "otherness" internal to their own symbol-forming activity. This implies that a person as subject is in constant process of becoming, continuously projecting his/her own changing perceptions of self upon others while others project their ideas upon the subject, are in a fluid and ever-changing dance of multiple identities. Whereas all cultures are symbol-forming and subject constituting, intercultural contact has the result of producing a hybridity within the liminal spaces that surface through interaction. New positions emerge, new discourses and meanings are articulated and the subject becomes alienated from itself as it reconstitutes itself in this third space. Because this is a never-ending process, people are essentially, according to Bhabha, decentered structures realizing difference as an *articulating world.*

From another perspective Said (1996, cited in Jacobs, 2004, p. 24), states "it is in culture that we can seek out a range of meanings and ideas conveyed by the phrase *belonging to* or *in* a place, *being at home in a place.* Spindler and Spindler (1994) refer to culture in terms of identity, as the enduring self located where a person connects to past culture, or perception of cultural ties and language, while dealing in a fluid and non-linear way with everyday living.

Carnegie (2002) uses the Caribbean Borderlands, in a similar manner to Anzaldúa's (1987) connection to the Mexican borderland peoples, to demonstrate that the concept of decentralizing forces and hybrid spaces in cultural understanding emerges out of an assumption that cultures were at some point in time fixed. He argues that cultures have always been in motion, always fluid, always influenced by each other in contrast to territories and states that have attempted to force cultural norms through equating people with place. The very notion of belonging, according to Carnegie, is a modernist issue rooted in control and conformity. Although useful in locating and giving voice to previously silenced peoples, belonging has since been taken up in postmodernist discourse through deconstruction and identification of mixed cultural sites as if the forces of globalization were somehow new. Carnegie points to the earliest records of humanity that demonstrate nomadity as the norm and sedentary populations as the exception. His research examines cultures and organizations "that refuse to accept state or racial boundaries as markers of community membership, economic participation and political practice" (Thomas, 2003, p. 12).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) attempt to clarify the processes of movement and stability, belonging and marginalization through the concept of "tensions". As people live in a variety of cultural worlds, certain tensions emerge around themes of certainty, place, temporality (time), action and context. These tensions vary from person to person and from group to group and take on multiple meanings and significance. In a similar vein, Bhabha (1996) writes "intersections"; entry points to new sites that open spaces between social interactions.

Within this theoretical collage, Lawrence Grossberg (1996) attempts to connect culture and identity with the aim of avoiding the problems of focusing uniquely on oppression as an unsurmountable divide across continuously divided difference. His premise is that if difference is insurmountable, modernity becomes inevitable. Grossberg uses the idea of agency to animate culture with identity and to show the limitations of associating identity with culture rather than with culture as the broader social reality under which identity detaches and reattaches itself. In defining agency as that which involves access and participation, he sees marginalization as "not a spacial position but a vector defining access, mobility and the possibilities of investment" (p. 100). If agency involves "spatial relations of places and spaces and the distribution of people within them" (p. 101), then the commonalities of identity and culture would be those same three axial points with the added bonus agency provides: that of "diagrams of mobility and placement" (p.102) defining both the limits and possibilities of influence.

From this, Grossberg extrapolates that because of the mapping, diagramming ability of agency, the subject can construct knowledge that respects the other without absorbing it into itself. This is neither universal nor particular. One concept that illustrates this premise is that of the "example" since an example exists both inside and outside the category it exemplifies. The very category of example implies the possibility of belonging without identity as in the example of those who participated in the uprising at Tiananmen Square. Participants all belonged to the uprising but their identities were separate from that event. The participants *identified*, however, with a unifying principle, a demand for acknowledgement of injustice, without their identities being absorbed into the principle, the group or the event.

On the social plane, it becomes therefore possible to exist in several simultaneous realities: 1) the reality of belonging and the attachments, albeit temporary, of place, time and history that are generally associated with culture, 2) the realities of oppression and marginalization in which access and mobility are limiting factors increasing and maintaining difference, 3) the reality of citizenship where belonging does not subsume identity, and 4) the reality of agency that traverses all of the above categories to initiate, secure, maintain and change culture, power relationships and citizenship. For me what is missing from this list are the boundary crossing realities of dialogue, friendship, ethics and artistic expression which add other factors into the identity/culture mix and without which it is difficult to imagine social existence.

Ghosh and Abdi (2004) provide a useful evolutional schemata of concepts of culture as they have influenced education. They begin with *consensus theory* that views education's role as cultural transmission and human capital formation, then move to *conflict theory* that questions cultural transmission as a relationship between power and knowledge, to *structural functionalism* that sees difference as neither accepted nor important. They continue with *cultural pluralism* whose premise is that the dominant group makes overtures to bring other groups 'in' on dominant group terms, and move to *radical theory*, proponents of which used Marx and Weber's materialist constructs to reveal the school's role in cultural reproduction and the maintenance of inequity. Within *linguistic theory* language (and vernacular forms of language) is constructed as class based and related to social mobility. *Critical theory* focuses on cultural resistance, whereas *postmodernism* works to accord legitimacy to alternative forms of knowledge and marginalized voices and *postcolonialism* is largely responsible for highlighting concepts of identity, culture and power. *Critical pedagogy* and *critical feminist pedagogy* emphasize the deconstructing of gender, race, sexuality and other unequal social relations in an effort to build a more equitable world. Although this is a grossly oversimplified account of the aims of all above theories, as an overview it helps to place the concept of culture in education within a broad theoretical and political context.

For me, Stenhouse's (1975) metaphor of horizon is the closest metaphor within which to define an understanding of culture for this study. Better understandings of self and the social worlds in which we live engender a sense of security and belonging that allow receptivity to new sites of cultural production. A focus on the horizon requires occasionally moving out of the known in an effort to better know and understand the other. If the locations of memory and cultural patterns are stabilizing fixing points, albeit temporary, then our daily living moves more to the realm of negotiation of tensions and the creation of new patterns of living together in a continuous tension between stability and change.

As we grow and experience life, we form cultural assumptions and ideas about ourselves and others based on perceived similarities and differences (Bennett, 1998). Shifting demographics, globalization, war, natural disaster, multiple languages, foods and customs and continuous aggressive advertising all function to destabilize and confuse. What may have been a cultural point of identification as a child, can change drastically through adolescence and again several times throughout adulthood.

3.B. The centrality of teachers to the concerns of culture

North American teacher education from the 1990s onward, according to Shulman (1987) has most frequently been rooted in an academic tradition of preparing teachers with a sound knowledge base in order to enable better dissemination of information (Reardon, 2001; Power, 2001; Brock-Utne, 1996; Delors, 1996). Content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, knowledge of learning and educational context and knowledge of educational ends still typify most teacher education programs (Braslavsky, 2002a & 2002b; Byron & Rozemeijer, 2001). Teacher intention has been and still largely is oriented towards product while both the learner and the teacher are assumed to be part of an undefined 'norm' that is basically white, middle class and proficient in the English language. From a critical point of view, this approach can be viewed as a technical, individualist and rational view of learning that has either little awareness of social considerations or sees them as peripheral components to be managed (Spillane,1999; Anderson, 1998).

Teaching, however, has always had a cultural agenda (Banks, 2000; Aull, Hacker, Postlewaite, Rustein, & Rutstein, 1996; Green, 1998). Issues of social class, teacher expectations and beliefs influenced by societal attitudes, clashes between dominant and variant cultural and religious values, problems of inequity and privilege, sexism, racism, homophobia and prejudice are all surfacing as problematic in teaching as they do in life. Each of us experiences the world in a particular way, in part as a result of our own histories and journeys. In education, however, it has become critical for those interacting regularly with an increasingly diverse student population, to develop the ability to stand at the intersections with others and to take a direction we can travel on together without arguing over which road is superior, more true, more beautiful, or more historically accurate.

UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (Rychen & Tiana, 2004) recently published a document resulting from interdisciplinary research to determine key educational competencies that, if introduced, applied and practiced would allow human beings to interact competently in the world. This initiative is in keeping with the 1996 Delors UNESCO report stating that of all educational goals, the most urgent is that of learning to live together. Interestingly, after studying curricular documents from around the world, the 2004 UNESCO research group found very similar concerns and orientations in spite of very different local, regional and national contexts requiring simultaneously differing and particular educational responses.

> There was broad agreement on some general domains related to competence such as joining, forming and functioning in groups; the management of innovation, continuity and complexity; a positive self-concept; and autonomy in the sense of reflective action and critical thinking (Rychen & Tiana, 2004, p. 15).

> Indeed, there is a broad consensus on the importance of social competencies, communication, literacies, lifelong learning, personal competencies, and competencies necessary for participation in the political or civil life. In addition, value orientation was another aspect of particular concern in several countries (Ibid, p. 14).

Following a well documented discussion, reflection and research to clarify terms and deal equitably with very diverse view points, the research group eventually defined competencies as "necessary prerequisites…for successfully meeting complex demands" and "complex action systems encompassing not only knowledge and skills, but also strategies and routines necessary to apply (them), as well as appropriate emotions and attitudes" (p. 40). These concepts were further elaborated under the headings:

1. Acting autonomously
2. Using tools (language, skills, text, knowledge, information and technology) interactively
3. Functioning in socially heterogenous groups

I would like to pause momentarily to examine this global movement towards competency in education in the context of Burbules's (2004) critique of educational ends. From the earliest recorded philosophical writings in a plethora of cultural contexts, education can be viewed as continuously moving back and forth between emphasis on ends related to the themes of: a) *knowledge* (the end is to become more knowledgeable, but which knowledge is valued and by whom?), b) *character* (the end is to become a morally better person and to improve the moral character of society but according to which societal norms and to the betterment of which sectors of society?), c) *competency* (the end is to be able to develop clusters of skills that can be flexibly applied to context-specific problem solving, but how is context to be perceived from different cultural perspectives and theories?), and most recently d) *deconstruction* of all ends (the end, paradoxically is to put an end to ends or norms since every norm creates a concurrent deviant population. But if the end of deconstruction is to bring the marginalized and the dominant together into a more equitable working relationship, then that is still a normative goal, so to what end are norms to be deconstructed?).

Seen in these four contexts with the problematics of each, it becomes a little easier to place educational movements within the constructs that most clearly inform the foundations of their creation. Notwithstanding, each so called category spills over into the others since: a) living is not really possible without some forms of knowledge, b) living together requires some kinds of societal norms and character driven values, c) the very act of staying alive assumes at least a basic subset of skills and, d) the desire to know, to uncover and explain the mysteries of the universe has been a human preoccupation since the beginning of time.

Since UNESCO research points to the significance of competencies oriented to educational commonalities across cultures, I would like to pursue the idea of a competency-based educational framework a bit further to examine its fit with questions of teaching in a culturally diverse world. The concept of looking to the ends of things and planning backwards from the desired competencies to more grounded ways to make progress towards and evaluate those competencies, constitutes the backbone of the authentic pedagogy movement (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002). In this framework, the concept of authenticity places students, their lived experience, ethnicity, social class, language, religion, knowledge of the world and capacity to interact in diverse social settings at the centre of all teaching.
What is promising about this idea for education is the possibility of incorporating both the general aims identified by UNESCO such as

acting autonomously, using tools interactively and gaining social competence in heterogenous settings, within the equally important exigencies of very specific local contexts, including local curricular mandates. The Teaching for Understanding model from David Perkins (1993) and the Understanding by Design (or backwards planning) framework by Wiggins and McTighe (1998) are two examples of competency based frameworks that incorporate critical thinking, planning, application across disciplines, development of empathy, self-knowledge and the capacity to see and consider a variety of perspectives. These methodologies are all much more culture-friendly and integrative than previous methods that focus uniquely or predominantly on knowledge acquisition or blithely universalist character development aims.

But this is where deconstruction can serve to clarify difficulties of application: at least two problems immediately trouble the waters of any good curriculum design or claims to best practice. The first, alluded to by Dimmrock and Walker (2002) is the receptivity of the social context for potentially equitable and innovative learning. Community developers Bopp and Bopp (2002) refer to this as assessing the community's capacity for development. After all, education and politics are closely interwoven, society is multifacted and complex in its ability to maintain ideology and many of those in currently prominent and rewarding places stand to benefit from keeping a difference-blind educational system intact. Dimmrock and Walker (2002) ask the following questions about educational approaches that advocate a move towards transformation and social action:

> - To what extent should schools be proactive in their attempt to change, as opposed to simply reflect societal values in respect to multiculturalism?
> - Which of the approaches is realistic and appropriate for a particular school or group of schools to adopt?
> - What are the respective roles of school leaders, teachers, parents, and curriculum developers in adopting and implementing the particular approach adopted? (p. 416).

The second set of questions I perceive as particularly pertinent to this study are these: Are teachers prepared to teach in this new paradigm? If they are, how are they to be prepared? By whom? And are teachers also prepared to deal with the ideological backlash that may result from their efforts at equity? These questions are surprisingly absent from the literature about educational curricular reform. Surprising, because other than the students, who could be more central to education than teachers themselves? And what good are equitable curriculum designs without teachers who espouse that same equity and are willing to continuously change and improve their practice to move closer to that ideal?

> Any consideration of multiculturalism and race relations in education that ignores the centrality of teachers would be inadequate since teachers play the pivotal role in educating for a socially just and plural society. The preparation of teachers for creating the conditions under which students can learn to work and live together harmoniously and productively is central to achieving these goals (McGregor & Ungerleider, 2004, p. 59).

In returning to the competency framework of UNESCO, if teachers are expected to guide their students in learning social competence, then they themselves would need to have mastered it to a certain degree. The ability to function in socially heterogenous groups becomes further complicated when one becomes aware of the concerns of class, culture, history, ethnicity and the importance of relating well to others, cooperation and conflict resolution. But what are the concerns of culture? And how can we understand something as all-encompassing and slippery as "culture" let alone "cultural identity"?

3.b.i. Why identity and culture matter in teacher practice

Ghosh and Abdi (2004) define identity as " the individual or the groups', conceptualizations and related livelihood practices that define who people are" (2004, p. 8). Taylor (1994, cited in Ghosh and Abdi) adds that for identity to be authentic, the subject of that identity needs to be the source of her/his identity if we are to avoid misrepresenting others through arbitrary imposition of aspects of our identity. Misrepresentation of others cannot help but produce negative spin-offs in educational settings. Some of these are articulated in anti-racist education studies as low self-image of marginalized students; silencing of some while privileging others; denying some knowledge in the interests of promoting other knowledge that unconsciously supports our own world views; lack of integration between genders, races, cultures, linguistic and religious groups, maintenance of social inequity, under-achievement and self-hatred (Fleras & Elliott, 1996; King, 1996). Resultant social problems are disengagement from school, drop-out, racially motivated aggression and violence to name a few (Hay, Khalima & Bavel, 2003). The unexamined identity seen in this context of social complexity is problematic. For teachers, self-knowledge of their own identities would have significant impact on their students if we are to follow Paulo Freire's (1970) logic of liberation from oppression through self and social awareness.

> In the first stage this confrontation occurs through the change in the way the oppressed perceive the world of oppression; in the second stage, through the expulsion of the myths created and developed in the old order, which like specters haunt the new structure emerging from the revolutionary transformation (p. 40).

Ghosh and Abdi (2004) elaborate:

> Educators need to understand the complexities and dynamics underlying the construction of identities because of their significance in the development of ideologies of nationalism, ethnicity, and student self-concept. Individual experiences intersect with class, color, and culture, and are embedded in history. Social distance or ranking is constructed not only on gender and race/ethnicity axes, but also on the social-economic and educational ones. Indeed, as a dynamic and key element of subjective reality, identity has a dialectical relationship with individuals as well as with society (p. 8).

Hardwick and Frideres (2004) in their study of 811 secondary students in Calgary found that for all secondary students studied, the strongest direct predictor of academic success was past achievement, which of course is not a new concept. For immigrant students, however, this means that a new experience in a new country, a new school, grade or subject should be geared towards initial success if immigrant students are to consider themselves capable. "They must have access to all the expertise and teaching skills in the school that allow them to achieve some level of success. For immigrant youth, this is especially important when they enter the Canadian school system" (p. 16). The study also indicated that although immigrant students performed as well as their Canadian born peers on the average, their self-concept was poorer and they considered themselves to be less capable. Self-esteem and educational aspirations were directly linked to scholastic achievement. These findings highlight the importance of continuous teacher encouragement for newcomer students and belief in their academic capacity. Indirect influences were found to vary in their individual effect, however as a whole, they accounted for 55% of effect on scholastic achievement. These factors were parental and family support, peer influence, parental education, teacher and school support, sex, and social class.

If we wish to improve school social climates for all students, it becomes critical for teachers to know what kind of a role they play in the emerging self-concept of students. Understanding how identity, ethnicity and culture intersect in school achievement and learning how to support their healthy development is becoming increasingly important.

> Every choice we make in a classroom is a statement of our identity, a decision that flows out of the sum total of

> experiences, values and orientations that make up our identities as teachers (Binder & Richardson, 1999, p. 11)

Educators, who are indisputably major influences in the lives of children and youth, are constantly projecting their worldviews, assumptions and sense of how the world "should" be onto their students. Being aware of one's values and orientations and realizing what identity constructs one brings to this situation of influence becomes a significant responsibility.

3.b.ii. Identity constructs in culture and education

Stuart Hall (1996) writes:

> …identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (p. 4).

As we experience life and 'identify' more with some identity markers than others, we take up temporary attachments. These attachments are constructed through the subject to a perceived place of the other.

This empathetic process may be described as an ongoing attempt to build bridges of meaning and understanding, always subjective, illusive and malleable. Because identity is held within the body, is frequently bound through space and time if only temporarily, yet is essentially an *imagined* set of positionings between self, other and world, we are morally bound to question it if we are to make progress in teaching both students who are like us and those who are not.

Individuals are constituted not only in their interactions with self, other and world but also as world acts upon them through culture, history, politics, opportunity for agency and access to knowledge. According to Bhabha (1996), identity is always a process of exclusion since we cannot take up a position of attachment in one area without excluding another. This idea relates to culture in that associations with various groups and their patterns of thought and behavior, necessarily excludes affiliation with others. In borderline cultures, individuals live in several spaces, continuously renegotiating who they are between groups. Through association (voluntary or involuntary) what eventually emerges is a kind of 'third space' of becoming that is neither one or the other culture, nor a combination of the two, but something new created in the intersections between. Even so Bhabha views cultural evolution as a negative, perhaps even futile process with 'peculiar types of culture-sympathy and culture-clash' (p. 54).

One of the foundational concepts to understanding identity in culture is Taylor's (cited in Fraser, 1998) explanation of the dual requirements of representation and recognition. We seek to be acknowledged for who we are on our own terms and this requires authentic recognition of difference. I do not want to be subsumed into a bland category of white Canadian women. My uniqueness decries reduction to a few definable characteristics based on my outward appearance, gender, place of birth and ancestry. On the other hand, I do not wish to be discriminated against for my differences. With regard to access to education and equitable treatment, with regard to possibilities for employment and being able to live my life safely and free from unwarranted interference from others, I would prefer to be without difference.

3.C. Concepts of recognition and redistribution

3.c.i. Recognition

As an attempt to frame participant narratives theoretically, I will use the social/cultural theory underpinnings of recognition and redistribution. In the recognition/redistribution paradigm attributed to Charles Taylor (Fraser, 1998), the subject is able to participate fully in both self and societal realization when recognized for who he/she is in his/her complete array of identity components. To be refused acknowledgement of the skin color, ethnic origin, history, gender, religion, professional expertise or any other aspect of one's identity is to be mis-recognized, to experience erasure, misunderstanding, loss of self-esteem and lowered self-efficacy. Every person wishes to be recognized for the unique person he or she is in all aspects of that complexity. To be treated otherwise results in mis-naming and generalizing that is ultimately harmful to the subject psychologically and to the capacity of the subject to participate fully and equally in society as a citizen. From a cultural standpoint, each group wishes to be recognized for its own particularities.

Persians, Turks and Arabs for example, are distinct cultural groups and although they may agree upon some generalized Middle-Eastern traits that distinguish them from generalized Western traits, they cannot be appreciated as unique cultures without reference to the distinctness of each culture (Lazlo, 1993). Within each culture are many variations and subcategories. Additionally there are individual differences in response to the greater and lesser surrounding culture;

locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. All of these aspects of living in a given society are part of the recognition of peoples. The more we recognize of each other, the more likely we are to be accurate in our understanding of each other. Impediments to recognition are: a sense of superiority and/or entitlement as are manifested in ignorance or apathy regarding life experience of others, fear, prejudice, discrimination and racism (Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2006; Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). Recognition as a concept, has been cast in the light of a psychological human need, a moral imperative, a requirement for intercultural exchange, a social orientation for equity, a requisite to justice or any combination of the above (Fraser, 2002; Archer, 1996).

The recognition concept has an underlying assumption of moral reciprocity: the more we recognize each others' distinctness, the more likely we are to find parallels of commonality. Conversely, insofar as we experience our common humanity, we are unlikely to treat each other in ways that would be distasteful to each other's diverse needs and understandings. Recognition's underlying theme is that embracing diversity (showing respect for each person's or culture's uniqueness) is more likely to lead to unity (the ability to work together towards a common goal) than insisting that unity (disguised as conformity) exists by ignoring or obliterating diversity (misrecognized as chaos or cultural misunderstanding). It allows a variety of peoples to live and learn side by side without insisting on the rightness of one cultural worldview over the other.

Simply tolerating cultural difference, however, is not the goal of Kymlicka's (1998) balancing of the rights and obligations of citizenship in multicultural Canada, however. His writing on "deep diversity" shows the essentially responsive and dialogic nature of a society that profoundly values diversity, echoed in Fleras and Elliot's (1992) premise that it is the sharing and understanding between cultures that is crucial, not simply diversity promotion.

From another perspective, leading multiculturalists, Banks, Cookson, Gay, Hawley, Irvine, Nieto, and Stephane (2000) and writers for UNESCO (Rychen & Tiana, 2004) use the overarching concept of unity *in* diversity as the joining of both specific and universalist concerns. In this understanding, the local (recognition) leads to the universal (norms of justice and moral commonality). Within the universal, we find many examples that redirect our attention towards application of principles to the unique contexts of local situations. Neither category is subsumed under the other, yet each influences the development and application of the other.

An educational example of this concept might be that schools in Sierra Leone and in Canada have specific needs that are rooted in very different local contexts. Sierra Leone has been a war torn country for 12 years and many children have not attended school. Those who have attended school find inadequate infrastructure, teacher training and resources. Additionally they are hampered by the vestiges of a colonial system of education that set up boarding schools outside of localities, which estranged them from their families and taught children the histories and values of the colonizers, effectively stunting the normal development of communities. Two main religious influences are Christianity and Islam. Concepts of God and religion are considered foundational to teaching and learning. Close to 100% of children in Sierra Leone are Black and speak local languages with some English. Teachers are also Black (information from *Free the Children* website, 2004 and *ilearn Sierra Leone* website, 2006).

In contrast, Canada is not a war torn country. Schools have run un-interrupted for almost 150 years and were influenced by European and American models of teaching and learning. Many Canadian schools had their beginnings in an attempt to address local agricultural and religious concerns and have since been deeply influenced by psychological, individualist understandings of human nature. Canadian children may be from a variety of Aboriginal peoples, or white descendants of many generations of European and Eastern European settlers, visible minority descendants of settlers from many different countries, including escaped slaves from the United States and Eastern Canada, recent immigrants, refugees, of many different religious and ethnic backgrounds. There is a majority of white students in Canadian schools generally, but between 10-70% of the population of schools across the country can belong to many different races and combinations of racial groups. Most Canadian teachers are white. Christianity is predominant but other religious minorities are gaining recognition. A secular, capitalist and materialist approach informs education in Canadian schools even if they carry a religious affiliation. Not all children speak one of the two official languages of Canada and many schools struggle with teaching proficiency in English or French, given the diverse language needs of students (Tomkins,1998; Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2004).

On the surface, these two national contexts are very different and the principle of recognition requires that these differences be recognized to serve the educational needs of children in both countries. However there are common educational concerns: each context wishes children to become literate and to have numeracy skills. In each context children need to learn to live together and to overcome prejudice; Sierra Leone has issues of war and violence based on tribal, ethnic, religious and nationalist prejudice, Canada has issues of bullying, exclusion, racism and marginalization of Aboriginal and visible minority peoples. UNESCO expert groups have found that there is unity of thought among educational circles in spite of very different local contexts (Rychen & Tiana, 2004; Braslavsky, 2002a, 2002b). One underlying theme across national boundaries is the recognition that children need to think critically, to have both locally applicable and internationally applicable skills that can transfer to new contexts in a changing world, and that part of those skills should include the ability to engage in social analysis to address the needs of the societies in which they live and enhance their technological expertise. Science, physical education and artistic expression are valued across continents in education, although the volition to accord them equal time and resources varies greatly.

But there are also commonalities between Sierra Leone and Canada that can help each country address its particular problems: both have a history of colonization and have experienced the destructive effects of residential schools, although in Canada residential schools were used predominantly to assimilate Aboriginal peoples, and in Sierra Leone to assimilate local people to colonist's ideas of who they should be and how they should act. Both have difficulty teaching English to heterogeneous groups and with encouraging literacy in mother tongues. Both have a history of joining religion with schooling. Both have not visibly addressed UNESCO's concerns about learning to live together, think critically or transfer skills to new settings.

From this example we might conclude that there are specific concerns that require recognition, that those concerns lead naturally to common concerns that could be addressed to meet local educational needs in each context, that there is a "universal" desire for standards of competency in matters of literacy and numeracy at the very least, that there are moral and religious questions both need to consider in the context of school and society, and that both have to consider how they will address that which will very directly impact the quality of life of their citizens locally, regionally, nationally and internationally through envisioning the kind of world they would like to create.

3.c.ii. Redistribution

The other side of the recognition coin is that we live in a material world where unequal distribution of goods and services is a daily reality. No person wishes his or her uniqueness to be an impediment to belonging or a barrier to the enjoyment of full privileges that membership in the human race entails. Any recognition of individuals or groups requires that goods and services be distributed adequately and equitably to meet those needs and rights of citizens. A society that can tangibly demonstrate all citizens have equal access to education, employment, resources, housing, and meaningful social, political and religious participation would be a truly just society with no further need to categorize others negatively as racialized, gendered or classed beings. In this regard, Genetsch (2003) quotes Bissoondath:

> I am still being judged by the color of my skin and not simply as a human being with strengths and weaknesses. I am still, even with my best of intentions, being viewed racially – and that is offensive to me (p. 17).

The redistribution aspect of this equation is an indicator that when people's lives change materially for the better, recognition must have taken place at least to some extent. "Redistributive remedies generally presuppose an underlying concept of recognition…Conversely, recognition remedies sometimes presuppose an underlying concept of redistribution…" (Fraser, 1998, p. 23). According to Fraser (2002, 1998), materialist social theorists see material gain as indicative of change to power relations. She writes that materialists claim that redistribution will lead to increased respect and recognition, which is essentially a justice issue (Archer, 2003). Since the redistribution claim is based on the overarching principle of justice, and is measurable materially, it is considered to have more academic weight (from a masculine, rights based, economic standpoint) than the ethics-based recognition claim that points to historically specific horizons of value which are subject to change (and may be considered a more feminist, relational and holistic position) (Fraser, 2002).

In her 1998 writing, Fraser responds to the issue with the following statement:

> The redistribution/recognition dilemma is real. There is no neat theoretical move by which it can be wholly dissolved or resolved. The best we can do is try to soften the dilemma by finding approaches that minimize conflicts between redistribution and recognition in cases where both must be pursued simultaneously (Fraser, 1998, p. 39).

Several years later, Fraser (2002) moves from a "softening" of the dilemma through simultaneous pursuit of both redistribution and recognition, to the idea of parity of participation where each is necessary to the understanding of the other. She explains that although theorists tend to polarize themselves at the extremes of either recognition or redistribution, she is able to show the two intertwining points of view as compatible under the umbrella of the *parity of participation* principle. Fraser (2002) argues that to be prevented from full participation as a peer in social life is to be subordinated. That this subordination is directly linked to mis-recognition and attribution of lesser value, decreased social status, which in turn justifies inappropriate distribution of resources. Fraser continues that to impose a single, essentialized position in the name of justice reifies the complex, flowing nature of culture, promotes separation and group enclaving and has the additional problem of obscuring struggles of dominance *within* groups. She shows in effect that parity of participation is an overarching concept under which both recognition and redistribution are recognized as partners in the goal of an equitable society, yet neither is subsumed by the other.

In this regard, Archer (2003) writes that the spaces of agency within the structures of society are part of a never-ending dialogue that engage a reflexive process necessary to personify "ideals of truth and goodness", by re-awakening them and presenting them to society to "re-stock the pool of societal values" (Archer, 2003, p. 361). This is what I have also attempted to demonstrate by explaining both the moral and ethical imperatives of recognition under the overarching principle of unity in diversity. Using redistribution as an indicator of progress towards justice that cannot be understood without recognition, helps to establish a climate within which both redistribution and recognition can take place.

As a school-based example of this concept, it is interesting to read Joshee's (1996) narrative:

> When my cousin-brother Neepun was in grade ten his English class had a unit on classical mythology. Given that this was 1990 in Edmonton, the focus of the unit was Greek and Roman myths. Each student was asked to prepare a presentation on one of the myths. Neepun's presentation consisted of comparing the Greek creation myth with the Hindu creation myth as told in the Ramayana. In preparing his presentation he learned more about Hindu myths and he was able to understand some of the similarities and differences between our ancestral traditions and the ancestral traditions of the dominant culture. The teacher and other students also benefited from seeing the Greek myth in another context. Following his presentation, other students also chose to incorporate aspects of their traditions or personal experiences into their readings of the myths. For me this story has always stood as an excellent example of how the exploration of one's particularity can push others to examine their own particularities and through this process develop richer common understandings (p. 39).

In education the recognition/redistribution dilemma has significant implications. According to Roopnarine and Johnson's research (2005) North American educational institutions have tended to focus on either redistribution or recognition to the detriment of both.

The authors name five educational approaches in North America over the past five decades that demonstrate the intertwining of redistribution and recognition underpinnings, summarized below:

- Most prevalent up to the 1960s but still active in schools today, is suppression of cultural diversity. This approach assumes that everyone needs to assimilate into the dominant culture in the interests of national unity without any response or change on the dominant side. It assumes an attitude of superiority and sets up an unequal power relationship between anyone who is outside of the dominant stream. Curricula only reflect dominant society and anything to the contrary expressed by students or their families is actively discouraged. This approach condones and even encourages prejudice, sets up marginalized students for failure and ill prepares dominant students to work and live in a diverse society.

- The melting pot mentality in the United States and the mosaic mentality in Canada assume "color blindness" which claims equal treatment of all children without any critical examination of practices that exclude some groups over others or maintain social inequity. Difference is seen as negligible, since all are assumed to be treated equally. In this scenario, the poor become entirely responsible for poverty and social strata are self-righteously maintained. This approach is prevalent in right wing political thought in Canada.

- Add-on multiculturalism views cultural difference as a strength rather than a weakness and focuses on mutual respect.

Cultures are added into the curriculum through bulletin boards, units and special days organized around dress, dance, celebration and food. Although none of these things by themselves are necessarily harmful, the idea that culture is something others have and to which the mainstream looks towards temporarily as exotic and outside of our daily experience does not take problematics of history, oppression, poverty or any other world realities into account. Neither does it allow students and their lives to be recognized as they themselves or would like to be seen and experienced. The dominant culture is seen as the charitable and generous entity extending moments of recognition, appropriate or not, to the other, who may be even more marginalized through misrepresentation.

- Bilingual/bicultural/heritage language approaches to diversity operate from a premise that all people can learn another language and become comfortable in another culture. The language approach advocates the right of various cultures to be educated in their own language and according to their own cultural preferences. Several studies demonstrate that through heritage language instruction, drop-out rates can be minimized, parent-child communication is improved, academic success is higher and positive self-image strong. These findings are from Collier and Thomas's (1997) collected data on more than 700,000 language minority students between 1982-1996. Other research shows how intercultural understanding is increased through immersion in a new language (Hebert, 2005). Although these trends appear to be a step towards a more responsive and integrative approach to diversity, immersion programs have been criticized for lack of cultural inputs and for trying to teach language independently of culture (Bennett, 1998). Heritage language programs seem to be beneficial to those students who have one mother tongue, but what about students who come to school with several languages? The United Nations has stated (*Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989)* that becoming bilingual and bicultural is the basic right of all children and an increasing necessity for our global society. From the ability to speak several languages arises the possibility for increased intercultural understanding.

- The fifth approach is what began as anti-racist education and has evolved into what Roopnarine and Johnson (2005) term antibias multicultural education. Its goals are to ensure "equitable individual participation in all aspects of society and to enable people to maintain their own culture while participating together to live in a common society" (p. 137). The antibias framework is not only a critique of inequity but an active engagement to teach children to respect themselves and others, consciously work towards equity and systematically eliminate prejudice and discrimination. In addition to deconstructing assumptions that keep social inequity in place, ideally new patterns of social interaction are learned by teachers and taught to their students to resolve conflict, promote peaceful behavior, recognize students while eliminating as many barriers to their success as possible and opening up curriculum to include critical readings of global issues and local participation in social justice. At this point

> however, the antibias framework remains at the level of the ideal and for reasons already mentioned, will need to be tested in the fires of community capacity for change and teacher education for that change.

If we take this evolutionary diversity education description back to the themes of identity, culture and praxis, the possibility of improved teaching for a more just world seems closer than if we consider difference to be a continuously un-navigable divide. It raises Lawrence Grossberg's (1996) appeal and pertinent questions in terms educators will welcome:

> I want to propose that cultural studies needs to move towards a model of articulation as 'transformative practice', as a singular becoming of a community. Both models of oppression are not only inappropriate to contemporary relations of power, they are also incapable of creating alliances…My feeling is that an answer depends upon rearticulating the question of identity into a question about the possibility of constructing historical agency, and giving up notions of resistance that assume a subject standing entirely outside of and against a well established structure of power…I would suggest that the question of a multicultural society is a normative ethical one: to what extent can a society continue to exist without a common, albeit constantly rearticulated and negotiated, culture? What are the conditions through which people can belong to a common collective without becoming representatives of a single definition? (p. 88)

3.D. The arts as border crossings for cultures and identities

One very promising direction in articulating Grossberg's concept of transformative practice can be found in Simon Frith's (1996) inquiry into how music and identity intersect across boundaries. His premise is that "while music may be shaped by the people who first make and use it, as experience it has a life of its own" (p. 109). In his comparison of music and identity, Frith gives examples from both high and low music (classical traditions in all cultures as high and popular music as low) of how music and identity are performative, narrative, involve mobility and becoming, describe the society in the individual and the individual in society and are present in body and mind, while transcending both though the emotional and aesthetic experience of listening and identification. He points to the enormous appeal of Afro-based musical styles around the world irrespective of culture, language, religion or experience and to the cross-over of cultures learning, appropriating and melding musical styles that logically, they should have no affinity for, if in fact, difference is completely insurmountable. Most importantly, Frith demonstrates through many examples how music is enjoyed and enjoyable, brings the concept of pleasure into an intercultural exchange and is actively sought across all boundaries that normally confine and define people.

In music making, participants have to engage in very responsive behavior based on intense listening to others and strategic placement of something that sounds 'right' within the context of the whole. Personal and social class preference for particular musical styles arguments aside, music making is a deeply satisfying experience both for the creators and for the audience. Music is an example of unity in diversity where no one loses recognition, rather recognition of difference is integral to the music while what is created from this diversity is a tangible example of Bhabha's (1996) third space which is neither problematic, nor power based but harmonious and whole, representative of cultures and classes, yet transcending of them to appeal to surprisingly different fans around the world.

Paul Duncum's (2001) work on the foundations of art education for global culture takes a visual critical approach. He demonstrates how critical readings of visual art can bring understandings of history not normally accessible outside of image. One classroom example shows teen students examining their own bedrooms for examples of influence of popular consumer culture and their own critical response to the degree to which they conform to market ideals. A study of the Yoruba's early appropriation of photography into their own cultural understandings and practices (Sprague, 1978) is another example of the transcendental capacity of art. J.C. Couture (2000) writes convincingly about using film, music videos and other media dear to popular culture to motivate students to personally and collectively engage with problematics of identity. Students take alternative perspectives and write fiction, advertisements and scripts to uncover the social injustices and global dilemmas of the original texts, honing their skills in critical social analysis.

Drama education has a long history of social involvement that engages students not only in critical thinking but also in collective creations along common areas of concern. A multiplicity of views can be taken from a dramatic perspective and although any lasting impact upon audiences remains unanswered, the transformational effect upon student participants is well documented (Conrad, 2004; Gervais, 2001; Edmiston, 2000; Winston, 1999; Saldaña, 1999; Sweeney, 1992; Danielson, 1992; Berghammer, 1991; Fransen, 1991; Rike & Wilkinson, 1990). Well known drama educator, Gavin Bolton (1981) writes:

> One cannot teach concentration, trust…patience, tolerance…social concern…one can only hope that education brings them about over the long term…the achievement of these admirable qualities is not intrinsic to drama; it is an important by-product of the dramatic experience (p. 186).

Adult drama work has been used for training service providers of drug and alcohol recovery programs (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 2001), to tap into indigenous knowledge (Pyrch & Castillo, 2002) and for enabling war traumatized women to find ways to talk about their ordeals and start a communal healing process (Lykes & The Association of Maya Ixil Women, 2001).

In artistic expression identities can be tried on, examined and exchanged. Social class positions can be experienced and responded to. Students can live in a variety of imaginary worlds and learn to express those worlds in gesture, image and sound as well as through language and number. Most importantly, the arts allow not only the articulation of the cultures and histories from which they emerge, but also have the capacity through imagination, to project into the realm of the possible the kind of world we would like to live in. In conclusion, the significance of the arts in questions of cultural identity is this: the study of difference and oppression, important as that is to making realistic change, without concurrent balancing with evocative human experiences and mutual enjoyment may ultimately encourage the very perpetration of the inequity we seek to unmask and dissolve.

This is why my study focuses upon teacher cultural identity strength rather than bringing educators to a place of pain and leaving them there to lose hope. McLaughlin Noguci, Hanson and Lample (1992) state that one of the capacities of capacity building leadership is the ability to "offer solace and bring joy". It is important to realize that both offering solace and bringing joy are outcomes of empathy. Without in any way minimizing the importance of the suffering that marginalization brings, finding ways to bring joy (an area in which the arts have much to offer) can do much to heal and bring difference from the impossibly problematic into the realm of the possible. Ghosh and Abdi (2004) write:

> The success of multicultural education programs will depend upon their ability to create unity within the diversity – to integrate ethnic identity at the individual level with a national identification (p. 73).

Even so, it is important to be vigilant to areas of identity and cultural attachments that insulate against the realities of differentiation and are rooted in the assumptions of dominant ideologies.

3.E. Resistance to knowledge and identity

A theme that comes to the fore in teacher education and professional development studies is the issue of resistance to knowledge. It is still commonly assumed that knowledge changes behavior. If this were true, people would not smoke or eat unhealthy food, engage in risk-taking behavior or demonstrate violence towards others or exploit the planet. Cognitive approaches to teacher education, important as they may be to understanding, are not likely to affect teacher belief or practice in either the short or long term. Joshee (1996) writes:

> In focusing so specifically on information and skills the predominant approach appears to ignore the fact that qualities such as acceptance and compassion are based on more than just reason and ability…In relation to multiculturalism, this leads to an overemphasis on integration and minimal or negative attention to self-assertion. In the end, the ideal of unity in diversity is reduced to conformity through assimilation. We are kept from touching the stars by a body of programs that fear difference (p. 29-30).

Carson and Johnston (2000) relying on Felman (1987) and Ellsworth (1997), argue that active resistance to knowledge is "rooted in the resistance of the self to dangerous knowledge" (p. 4). The self, threatened with disintegration of what it knows itself to be, rejects new information as a protection device. Simply knowing that white privilege and systemic racism are real, does not help white educators to change their beliefs or attitudes towards their students because their own identities are under siege. A threatened self cannot respond to a threatened other except through fear, anger or continued denial. Conversely, visible minorities and First Nations peoples who come to an understanding of white privilege and systemic exclusion are not likely to be in a position to respond to that knowledge other than with anger, fear and retaliation. In this condition, both groups move farther away from each other, prejudice is entrenched, alienation reinforced. If more knowledge and skill is not the answer, what can be done? Where then is the opening to a space where differing individuals and groups can learn to better live together? Spillane (1999) and Anderson (1998) point to the importance of secure space and collaborative reconstruction of new social ground where teachers feel that they have a sense of control over change and are able to build collaboratively a workable framework in which they are the actors. Additionally Olson (2002) underlines the necessity of a dialogue between professional bodies where teachers are able to assess and question the system.

> Attention is increasingly drawn to concepts of self-development, self-assessment, deliberation, reflective practice and collaborative partnership to support teacher participation in practice as well as policy processes. These professional practices entail questions about human values, beliefs and moral considerations...(p.133)

It is not surprising that teachers are resistant to change when they perceive themselves as being controlled by forces outside of themselves. Even less surprising is the idea that when one's values, beliefs and morals come into question it may be difficult to respond appropriately. However, even with the presence of conditions that validate and centralize teachers as described above, teachers as members of a greater society are prone to those same societal biases and prejudices that effect everyone, making equitable teaching all the more elusive.

> What makes teacher expectations and the resultant discrimination so difficult to eradicate is that personal beliefs are deep-seated, part of our individual and cultural experiences, and therefore difficult to change from the outside. They are also often hidden (George and Aronson, 2003, p. 11).

In desiring to reverse the problem George and Aronson describe above, and given the currently weak results of methodologies that either attempt to address prejudice head on or seek to effect change without an adequate assessment of the social reality that surround conditions for change, it behooves educational researchers to develop new methodologies that allow teacher cultural identities to become pivotal to the learning process in the manner authentic pedagogy strives to center students' lived social realities in their learning. A number of studies have tried to access teachers' tacit understandings. One commonly used method is to observe teachers in the classroom over time. Another is to speak to them at various intervals to find out what is said more often or what is left out. Researchers may also confront research participants with the ambiguities and contradictions in their practice and observe their reasoning and possible changes in practice following these confrontations.

Sanger (2001) used all of the above in making a direct inquiry into how teachers' moral frameworks affected their practice. The findings of this inquiry showed that teachers' moral frameworks operated very strongly in all areas of their professional lives although they were initially tacit at the beginning of the research project. As awareness rose from tacit to explicit knowledge, the teachers in Sanger's study did not change their practice but rather drew confirmation and encouragement from their articulations as proof that they were congruent in thought and in action. This confirms the findings of Carson and Johnston (2000) that a person's identity seeks to confirm itself rather than to dissolve and reconstruct when confronted.

3.e.i. Ethnic identity and opposition

Phinney (1990 cited in Ghosh, 2004) did extensive research into the development of ethnic identity, which may help to shed light upon teacher cultural identity formation. From the study of numerous research projects Phinney determined that educational settings contribute to student self concept as ethical and intellectual beings as well as the degree to which students feel they have agency to shape both their academic performance and their lives. Phinney found that within the context of minority experience, an initial psychosocial stage of ethnic identity formation appeared to be lack of interest in ethnicity.

A desire to ignore or discredit ethnicity may be an effort to avoid being defined according to reductable characteristics as mentioned earlier. If positive ethnic group feelings are not fostered in the school setting, threat to self-concept makes individuals more vulnerable to behavioral and emotional disorders (Phinney, 1990 cited in Ghosh & Abdi, 2004).

Oppositional identities develop among involuntary minorities (as previously mentioned, involuntary minority means one doesn't choose to be a minority because of skin color. One may choose to be a minority by adopting a radical hair style for example, which would be considered a voluntary minority). Oppositional tendencies cause involuntary minority students to move away from say, academic excellence since that is associated with the dominant cultural identity. Peers may contribute to this by reinforcing compliance to codified ideals about how different groups are 'allowed' to act. Teachers contribute by expecting less of involuntary minorities and offering less help if they fall behind in their studies.

Second or third generation non-white youth in Canadian schools with no accent or problems reading dominant cultural clues may still experience discrimination leading to confusion about identity. Although they are born in Canada, they are perceived by dominant society as not belonging. In this case, youth may alienate themselves from both the dominant culture and their parent's culture leading to increased loneliness and alienation from society.

According to Phinney (1990 cited in Ghosh & Abdi, 2004), key identity themes across ethnic groups involve:

> …self identification, or how one sees oneself rather than focus on one's descent; a sense of belonging, related to the experience of exclusion or detachment from one's own or the dominant group; positive and negative attitudes toward one's ethnic group leading to pride and pleasure, or denial of ethnic identity and feelings of inferiority; and sensitivity to specific cultural practices such as music, dress, traditional roles, knowledge of history and culture, which may be necessary for understanding individual groups and their experiences. *The teacher is not expected to learn all cultures. The need is to enable a positive sense of self through a general*

> *knowledge of other cultures, and an empathy with all minority cultures [my emphasis]* (p. 85).

It seems redundant to say that teachers who perceive either individual students or groups of students as incapable, inferior or suspect, will not encourage learning of those students and are likely to reinforce inequity through their beliefs, attitudes and ensuing behavior towards students and view of the curriculum. George and Aronson's (2003) exploration of how educators' cultural belief systems affect underserved students' pursuit of postsecondary education shows how lowered teacher expectations, preconceived notions about race, language, culture, religion and social class, and misunderstandings about culture-based student behavior as deviant, result in students' lowered perceptions of themselves and their abilities. Students become either 'raceless' as they try to act white and be accepted by other groups or they choose culture over education as they perceive their chances for success in both education and employment to be severely limited. Students who are disadvantaged by negative teacher belief are tracked for failure. Additionally parent participation in educational or school culture events is covertly discouraged resulting in lower participation of certain racial and ethnic groups in postsecondary studies.

But can educators develop this kind of ability to nurture the ethnic identity development of their students without a sense of their own racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious and national group identities? Lipka (1996) in examining culturally based pedagogy from the perspective of a Yup'ik teacher notes that in spite of several years of teacher education in a mainstream university, the Yup'ik teacher in his case study showed a very strong culture-specific teaching style. When the researcher showed teaching videos of the Yup'ik teacher to non-Yup'ik teachers, they were unable to see the Yup'ik teacher's strengths and had to view the video several times to be able to identify and articulate the cultural practices he effectively used with Yup'ik students. Non-Yup'ik teachers initially dismissed his style as deficient, since it was unfamiliar to them. Again, the issue of resistance to what one assumes to be outside of personal experience surfaces in teacher assumptions of what is 'good' teaching.

Ghosh and Abdi (2004) do not address the problem of educators' resistance to perceived threat of difference from a teacher identity perspective although it is not difficult to imagine the problem of implementing general cultural knowledge and empathy towards who and what are perceived as threatening to self. Also unexaminined are the possible variety of responses from educators from a variety of ethnic groups. It is not only white teachers who are susceptible to threatened identities or unexamined assumptions and prejudices. This points to the importance of developing a reflective teacher cultural identity for all educators in the best interests of promoting equitable education and a more equitable society generally.

3. F. The Multicultural Education Versus Anti-Racist Education Debate

Over the past thirty-some years in Canada and the United States, two predominant arguments have emerged in response to the question of how to educate teachers for a pluralist society, namely multicultural education and anti-racist education. Kehoe and Mansfield (1993) describe the goals of multicultural education as: “equivalency in achievement, more positive intergroup attitudes, and developing pride in heritage” (p. 3). Anti-racist education according to Tator and Henry (2000) seeks to change the total organizational structure of institutions by revealing the structural injustices that have resulted from systemic racism and prejudice.

To further illustrate the dilema it is useful to return to Fraser’s (1998) constructs of recognition and redistribution. To reiterate, the former can be explained as a desire to be recognized as distinct and unique from other individuals or other groups whereas the latter would fall under the desire of each and all to be considered equal with regard to education and work opportunities. Within the recognition factors fall Kehoe and Mansfield’s (1993) pride in heritage and improved intergroup attitudes. Redistribution may be described as a social ordering that seeks to uncover and eventually render impossible, the injustice of systemic racism and its resultant discriminatory practices that assign poverty to some and riches to others. The dilemma can be framed with the following questions. Shall we attend to difference in order to promote equality or should equality of opportunity be the path that brings recognition of difference through economic re-ordering? Can, in fact one exist without the other, or are they in a dialectical relationship of mutual reinforcement?

Kehoe and Mansfield (1993) write that both multicultural and anti-racism educators share the concerns of *advocating greater equality of opportunity*. Multicultural education seeks to do this by:

- attuning teaching strategies to culturally different ways of perceiving and learning,
- developing more culturally relevant curricula and
- providing basic knowledge of students' own cultures,
- improving self-image through valuing the students' culture(s) (p. 4).

Anti-racist education works to accomplish this goal by:

- identifying and eliminating both the intentional and unintentional barriers to equity in the education system
- uncovering hidden curriculum
- rectifying assessment, tracking and disciplinary inequity in schools (Ibid.)

Summarized below Kehoe and Mansfield (1993) further identify commonalities between the two approaches as:

- concern with countering individual and institutional racism
- removal of bias and ethnocentrism from texts and curriculum
- rejection of multicultural and anti-racist initiative as an addendum to the social studies program; rather the incorporation of cultural goals throughout the curriculum
- favoring of team projects, small group work, and dialogue to maximize student interaction
- supporting heritage language teaching
- insistence on better communication and closer relationships with students' home environments
- broadening of the focus of human relations study from strictly national to global concerns.

This brings us back to the principles of authentic pedagogy previously discussed. Joshee (1996) explains that the tendency to pit multiculturalism and anti-racism against each other is an example of the western dualist paradigm. She writes:

> It is constructed around a series of irreconcilable opposites – sameness and difference, rational and non-rational, progress and tradition, the universal and the particular. In each case programs are bound to choose one of the pair as the "right" alternative to promote and cast the other aside as either unimportant or objectionable (p. 29).

Given the current condition of the world, it would be difficult to argue the importance to education of any of the above points. Concurrently it is easy to see on a conceptual level how both anti-racist education and multicultural education would compliment each other and serve each other's interests in creating a more equitable world. Yet the proof of the pudding is in the tasting. What results have we seen in anti-racist or multicultural education that point to either a more just attitude towards those perceived as 'other' or show evidence of social mobility? How effective are either? Have studies and programs succeeded in changing teacher attitudes and practice if the criteria for success are students and teachers showing less prejudice and more harmonious intergroup interactions? With some 30 years of experience behind us, what is the actual success rate for multicultural and/or anti-racist educational endeavors?

3.f.i. Effectiveness of Multicultural and Anti-racist teacher intervention research

McGregor and Ungerleider (2004) in their meta-analysis of research on multicultural and racism awareness programs for teachers ask themselves what programs have been offered in the area of teacher education towards a more equitable world, what characteristics these programs have and which are effective in changing prejudicial attitudes in teachers. Of the 46 studies chosen, 19 between 1967 and 1985 were carefully considered for changes in teacher attitude. 40-100% of teachers in these studies were white, with males constituting 30% of the total groups studied.

Regression analysis revealed that there was no significant difference in attitude changes between student teachers or in-service teachers, or between minority groups targeted for prejudice reduction. Duration of program (longer programs seemed to have higher attitude changes, but only up to a certain duration after which attitudes appeared to plateau), ethnic composition of the group (a larger percentage of white teachers showed higher scores of positive attitudinal change) and gender (women showed generally more positive attitudes towards minority groups and generally greater attitude improvements than men) were independent variables showing important results.

The most troubling finding was the presence of 30% of negative attitudinal change, meaning that a considerable number of participants emerged after the teacher education program with *more* rather than less prejudice towards targeted minority groups. The authors were unable to determine in what ways anti-racism approaches and multicultural approaches affected attitudinal change, however, questions regarding content and procedures of interventions arose out of that data. The meta-analysis revealed that insufficient attention was accorded to theoretical and empirical literature on attitude and behavior change prior to designing the intervention. Other inconsistencies were inadequate knowledge of the principles of curriculum design and implementation.

Solomon and Rezai-Rashti's study (2001), examined racial identity development of student teachers enrolled in a program of diversity teacher education in Toronto over a period of several years. The evaluation focus year (1998-99) used 60 volunteers from the program to study racial identity before, during and after teacher practicum experiences where student teachers were encouraged to actively promote racial equity. Identity indices, anecdotal reports, journal entries, surveys, individual interviews and focus groups all provided data covering both breadth and depth of attitudinal changes. Perception of self as a racial, cultural being, competence to teach in a multicultural setting, capacity and desire to engage in intergroup relations among student teachers, perception of personal and professional growth and student-teacher perceived response of cooperating teachers, administrators and schools towards active promotion of multicultural and anti-racist goals were all considered in the data analysis.

The study showed that candidates of color and white candidates entered teacher education with different perspectives and needs, polarizing them from the onset. White teachers tended to have an over inflated sense of competence to implement multicultural education goals combined with superficial understandings of the problems that systemic racism causes for minority groups. Student teachers of color were more ambivalent about their competence to teach in a diverse classroom and their ability to deal with racial incidents. Covert resistance to antiracism pedagogy by a white sub-group surfaced in all aspects of the study similarly to the McGregor and Ungerleider (2004) analysis.

Needs of candidates of color were frequently sacrificed to meet the white student teacher needs. Student teachers had initial personal and professional growth plans that included making contact with unfamiliar groups, but very few of these goals were realized. This appeared to be due to: a) inconsistency of example from the diversity institute instructors, b) time and energy demands from the practicum constraints and exigencies, c) insufficient support of intergroup teacher interaction at the practicum sites, d) insufficient space in either the university program or the practicum for student teachers to develop friendships and, e) no incentive either personal or professional to pursue inter-group friendships.

The actual experience of the practicum served to further frustrate the goals of diversity teacher education. Schools were unprepared to work within a framework of diversity and tended to congratulate white student teacher initiatives but not support them, whereas initiatives of student teachers of color were regarded with suspicion and accusations. One positive finding of the study was that the capacity of both white and student teachers of color to deal with racial incidents and their understanding of the complexity of interracial interaction improved. Many mentioned the importance of the class readings in beginning to shape their sense of teacher cultural identity. More inclusive classroom language was also prevalent as the practicum advanced. These findings point to the importance of teacher comfort with new understandings prior to applying those same understandings in a classroom setting.

The Dee and Henkin (2002) study of assessment of preservice teachers' disposition toward cultural diversity reinforces the Solomon and Rezai-Rashti findings. 150 preservice teachers about to enter multicultural education at a large United States university responded to two surveys: the Stanley Pluralism and Diversity Attitude Assessment (1992) and the Multicultural Attitude Questionnaire (Giles & Sherman, 1982). Findings showed that candidates entering elementary education had strong assimilationist attitudes, and students intending to specialize in special education were significantly uncomfortable with diversity as were physical education candidates.

They also found that teacher candidates with a diversity of friends were more supportive of the social value of diversity and that older students on the whole scored much lower in their value of diversity. Interestingly African American teacher candidates favored assimilation more than white students, which was attributed to a tendency to see success in terms of adopting white, middle class values. In conclusion the study reiterated that most teacher intervention programs appeared to be ineffective in changing attitudes that favored diversity and made two recommendations to address the problem. The authors suggested that firstly, all teacher candidates be screened for attitudes towards diversity prior to program acceptance in order to reduce propagation of prejudice and inequity in education. Secondly, authors strongly recommended that teacher candidate assessments measure progress towards the goals of pro-diversity attitudes and practices that would determine coaching towards successful completion of an education degree.

For my research, I have chosen to focus on a process of cultural self-discovery in community. If groups exposed to “dangerous knowledge” tend to resist that knowledge, then an initial path of “least resistance” may effect more voluntary, sustainable engagement on the issues of diversity in education. If change is organic and systemic, then personal reflection into teacher practice will not suffice for change of either belief or practice, hence the emphasis on communal cultural identity exploration. And if “interventions” have resulted in a 30% negative turn around in a given professional development context, then self-initiated, identity strengthening cultural explorations look to be more fruitful than a methodology of exposing teachers to identity threatening knowledge. Finally, it appears to me that it becomes pivotal to engage both the emotions and the imagination in a foray into teacher cultural identity, given current criticism of cognitive-based interventions.

3.f.ii. The importance of refusing to sidestep white privilege

In order to be effective over the long run, the above approach to avoidance of resistance and focus on cultural strength, must not in any way sidestep the issue of white privilege and its role in maintaining current power imbalance in Alberta’s school system. As was previously discussed, racism is both a foundational and recurring theme in Canadian history (Crawford, 2005; Schick and St. Denis, 2005; Cameron, 2004). Any consideration of culture needs to be painted against the backdrop of realizing the effects of prejudice and Canadian complicity in the promotion of an ideology of whiteness that normalizes invisibility and privilege (Schick & St. Denis, 2005).

Lea and Helfand (2004) explain that whiteness is a "constellation of social practices, knowledge, norms, values and identities" that keep white people in a disproportionate control of access, power and privilege with regard to people of color (p. 14). From Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) analysis of structural advantages and structural practices of whiteness to Peggy McIntosh's (2000) seminal work in unpacking the invisible backpack of white privilege onwards, the importance for white educators to examine their own constructs of whiteness is becoming more and more critical. The social impacts of Eurocentric urban schooling on visible minority students has been sufficiently documented. We also know that the teaching population in Alberta is 96.4% white, and largely uni-lingual, (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2004). What has not been sufficiently researched, are the reasons why there are so few visible minority teachers in Alberta hired, even less retained, and how this imbalance affects the development of each successive generation of students. Attitudes of white privilege cannot be ignored in this discussion.

Lippin (2004) writes:

> Without conscious intent, white teachers who have not interrogated their own identity issues perpetuate blindness to the impact of who we are and what and how we teach (p. 111).

Lippin also lists the three dynamics of white power, attributed to Gary Howard (from Lippin, 2004) in 1999 as:

1) Assumption of rightness
2) The luxury of ignorance
3) The legacy of privilege (p. 111).

The author then proceeds to explain her own journey in learning to recognize, name and work to undo the damage that white supremacy ideology had instilled in her own sense of identity as a white person.

As part of this personal journey, Lippin provides examples from her courses on whiteness to university students and provides ample evidence of the difficulties white people have with naming the systemic racism that empowers and privileges their life chances and access to opportunities. Some of the techniques she uses with students in this course include poetry and prose by authors of color from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, student panels of varied ethnicity talking about their life experiences, and life-skill strategies to directly or indirectly name whiteness in spaces where racism is not in question in order to draw attention to the dynamic of the "white elephant" in the middle of the room.

In the Canadian context, Solomon (1996), writes about the attitudes of over 1000 white teachers in 5 school jurisdictions with high visible minority student populations surveyed across Canada (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1994). His survey sought teacher perspectives on policy goals and implementation of multiculturalism, specific beliefs about pedagogy, classroom practice, community relations, and professional development initiatives for multicultural and anti-racist innovations. From the survey, 35 teachers, 10 administrators and 6 race relations/ethnocultural advisors agreed to individual interviews on the topic of multiculturalism in education. The resulting comments were summarized in a catalogue of teacher comments from data:

- Canadians first, ethnicity after; equity comes from seeing ourselves as Canadians first;
- Canadians first; focus on similarities not differences;
- United States assimilationist model is preferred over multiculturalism; there is popular belief in the melting pot philosophy;
- Multicultural Education shows no respect for Canadian institutions, customs, values, traditions; it should not erase aspects of Canadian culture;
- Cultural assimilation should be encouraged, not Multicultural Education; unwillingness to assimilate causes friction, alienation;
- Some ethnocultural values, norms, traditions are unacceptable in a democratic society;
- Minority groups expect too much from society; they must adapt and adjust;
- Multicultural Education should include Canadian citizenship education including traditions and cultures; learning Canadian culture and values is important for new immigrants;
- This multiculturalism crap has gone too far! (p. 70).

From the interviews attitudes of resistance to non-white interference in so-called Canadian values found in the above statements, appears to be a flimsy cover for racism. As an antidote, Marx (2004) writes about a research initiative she took in "cultural therapy" for white pre-service teachers after troubling findings from a previous study revealed how unconscious attitudes of white superiority were manifested towards Mexican Spanish speaking children they were tutoring. In her initial study, 9 unilingual English speaking white women, 4 Latin-American Spanish/English bilingual women and 1 Latin-American Spanish/English bilingual man spoke with researchers about their beliefs regarding their tutees to meet or exceed their own success, however they defined it. The Spanish speaking teachers all believed that their students could meet or exceed their levels of success.

> In contrast, all white participants who tutored Spanish speaking children believed that the children would drop out of school before graduation. *None* of them felt that the children would reach their own level of success (p. 133).

Marx (2004) goes on to state:

> "...ignorance alone cannot explain their low expectations and their tendencies to view the children through a deficit lens (Valencia, 1997). Racism, in contrast, explains these impressions very well (p. 135).

I would add that racism also explains "very well" the attitudes of teachers in Solomon's (1996) Canadian study. It is likely that Canadian social researcher, Peter Li (2003) would agree. In his analysis of the articulation of race and racial difference in Canada, he shows how racial "subtexts" are used to show Canada as a benevolent country that tolerates the burden of people of color. In his analysis, a quote from Employment and Immigration Canada in 1989 explains that it would be wrong to dismiss the uneasiness and concerns of Canadians about immigrants as rooted in racism because we have to remain proud of Canada's humanitarian and tolerant traditions. From the same department, several years later in 1994, Li shows how the word "diversity" is used as a code word to designate non-white immigrants and the problems they have brought to urban Canada, their "questionable" values and behaviors and their "tendency" to undermine Canadian unity.

> In short, the message makes it clear that racism is unacceptable to Canada, and Canadians remain tolerant and are not being racists when they voice their concerns over too much "diversity (p. 10).

The same racial code language is used in more recent documents and justified via public opinion polls that continue to ask Canadians what kind of immigrants might be acceptable to them and in what numbers from what racial, national and ethnic groups (Li, 2003, p. 6, 14). The very act of continuing to ask this question to the public, along with other factors such as discrimination in the media, public discourse and the arts, and ongoing racial profiling by Canadian police, fuels mistrust of non-white groups – the results of which clearly show disadvantage to life chances of non-white immigrants in the labor market and other areas of public and private life (Galabuzi, 2005; Li, 2003) .

Although it is important to note that there are many variations between groups within the very broad category of "visible minorities", despite employment equity measures, the Canadian labor market cannot be said to be "color blind". (Pendakur & Pendakur, 2002; Lian & Matthews, 1998).

Whiteness, like visible minority, is a difficult concept to define. Marx (2004) writes that the construct of whiteness links white people collectively to a position of social dominance and a normalizing of power, access and privilege that holds white as the standard for all. Of course "white", like the term "visible minority", is a generalized category, nuanced by social class, religion, ideology, opportunity, citizenship, and other categories of differentiation. It is nonetheless the case that whiteness as norm renders its effects invisible to those who most benefit from it and enables the labeling of non-white others as deficit. Solomon (1996) writes with regard to the effects of whiteness in education:

> Dominant group teachers, because of their own privileged locations within the social order, and their limited professional preparation for cultural diversity, show the uncritical tendency to accept the status quo. A key developmental task for teachers as professionals, therefore, is to unshackle themselves from the reproductive institutional structures and processes and engage in issues of cultural legitimacy, democracy and equality (p. 73).

Marx (2004), proposes an intervention to help the teachers in her study not only realize what damage white racism does to students, but to in some way begin Solomon's teacher developmental project. To do this, she engaged in a version of "cultural therapy", adapted from Spindler (1987, cited in Marx, 2004). White teachers in her initial study were offered an opportunity to examine biases and prejudices in a safe one-on-one environment over a period of weeks. What follows is a fascinating account of one of these 9 participants as she moves from denial to catharsis, in coming to see her own privilege as a white person and viewing its detrimental effects on her students. Following this self-awareness testimony, Marx demonstrates how this participant made a conscious choice to root out any vestiges of racism in her life ranging from seeking diversity-friendly teaching resources and developing a critical view of the curriculum to postponing her marriage unless/until her fiancé overcame his racist views about people of color. Marx reports that seven of the nine participants went through a similar process with observable results that were sustainable over time.

Although this narrative is interesting to read and certainly speaks to the deeply personal work that white teachers must do to recognize and re-balance the system of privilege in which they live and breathe, cultural therapy is a time-consuming project and virtually impossible to imagine in a context such as Alberta where such a large majority of the current teaching population is white. Even more difficulties are encountered when examining the data of a meta-analysis of process-model teacher cultural competency intervention studies (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). One of the interventions (Sleeter 1992, cited in McAllister & Irvine, 2000) found that although teachers reported a change in practice based on what they perceived as their own attitude changes, these changes were *not* reflected in their classroom practice. Individuals with multicultural experiences placed higher in all the typologies examined and only achieved higher levels of intercultural competency when they developed a "positive sense of self, including an awareness and acceptance of their own ethnic group" (p. 19). Of all the studies examined in the McAllister and Irvine survey, the only real changes to practice appeared to be more attention paid to Black students and increased use of cooperative learning techniques, both of which are positive and promising, but inadequate within the current magnitude of visible minority student disengagement.

Fortunately, Isajiw (1999) has some success to report with regard to interventions striving to overcome prejudice. An experiment by Sherif et al. (1961, cited in Isajiw, p. 164), showed how a group of boys taught to behave towards each other through prejudice in a simulation called "the robber's cave" were able to overcome their fear of each other when they had to work together to meet the common goals of finding a water supply and pull a truck out of the mud. Their response to a common need allowed them to see each other's importance and as a bonus also overcame their prejudice towards each other. From the same source, adult examples of prejudice reduction revolved around neighborhoods collaborating around a common goal or cooperating to deal with a threat such as natural disaster. A joint project of the Human Relations Foundation of Chicago and the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States (1992) described numerous examples of individuals, community groups, faith groups and institutions working together across difference towards mutually significant goals. Numerous signs of both prejudice reduction and increased inter-racial harmonious social contact were observed.

In conclusion, contact with different races in a context that allowed them to collaboratively reach a common goal, enabled individual strengths to become visible across difference and led to reductions in prejudice – an approach that appears more useful in large group contexts than cultural therapy, as interesting and evocative as it may be.

Given the above complexities surrounding white privilege, I must be constantly vigilant not to impose a white, individualistic interpretation on my participants' words, neither can I trivialize their pain in my enthusiasm over signs of creativity and resilience.

> A long history of hurtful experiences can make people suspicious and reluctant to trust. Fear of making mistakes and inadvertently offending can make people hesitant. For everyone, the need to step out of one's comfort zone and habits of life requires conscious effort. Initial rejection might have to be overcome, but the effort is so worthwhile! Friendships thus formed between individuals, based on respect and sincerity, nurtured with the skills of nonjudgmental listening, can become powerful bonds and resources for mutual support and healing (Hacker, 1996, p. 203).

Ultimately, as human beings learning to better live together, we are striving to integrate both a grounded, realistic understanding of inequity, with real friendships that do not make racial difference another reason to maintain distance. bell hooks (1999) writes that we are both limited and empowered by race, gender, class and religion. It is certain that dangers emerge when we ignore what she calls the "sea of whiteness" or "sea of Blackness", yet she asserts: "...the point is about how we mainta

4.A. Introduction to the participants and their thoughts about cultural identity

Who am I culturally? What does it mean to be Armenian, Malawian, Rwandan, Cameroonian, Canadian...

To help situate individual participants in the research context, I will describe each participant and his/her circumstances prior to discussing them as a research group or exploring the questions and issues that emerged from their conversations together. In order not to interrupt the flow of the narratives, theoretical considerations will appear following their anecdotes at key points throughout the chapter. Pseudonyms chosen by the participants are used in all descriptions and quotes of participants.

Participants in this study were from four different cultural backgrounds, Armenian, Malawian, Rwandan and Cameroonian. Two were immigrants to Canada who arrived in Eastern Canada and migrated west; Manzi came from Rwanda as a refugee and Genesse arrived as a young adult immigrant from Cameroon. The other two participants I consider first generation Canadians although their circumstances are different. Anahid was born in Montreal to Armenian parents who had immigrated to Canada as adults. Eric was born in Malawi but moved with his family to Eastern Canada as a child with few memories from Malawi. Although I originally made no distinctions between the four participants outside of their singular expressions of racial and cultural difference, I soon came to see them as belonging to two pairs with particular characteristics. The first pair emerged distinctly as immigrants who have embraced Canada with an appreciation and love that I will describe later in detail. They spoke frequently of the effort they made to belong to their new country and of their pride in being able to call themselves Canadians. They were also proud of their national, racial and cultural origins and spoke with authority about their cultural roots. The second pair had much more ambivalent feelings towards Canada and their countries of heritage and were striving to situate themselves culturally. They also had more ambivalent feelings about their families and jobs, accepting to live conflicting and contradictory realities but with a certain amount of ongoing discomfort.

Language considerations

It is important to note while reading the participant dialogue excerpts, that English is a second, third or fourth language for all participants. Although I did not plan it this way, coincidentally three of the research participants taught in French Immersion schools in Alberta where they spent the entire day working in French. Because of this dynamic, it will become obvious that the spoken English of two research participants would not be adequate for them to be teaching in Anglophone contexts. One participant did not speak French and if the occasional comment came up in French, it was translated by one of the others for him, however, the entire research project was conducted in English. Participants were enthusiastic about the project and did not have any trouble either expressing themselves orally or being understood in English. I chose not to correct any grammatical errors unless they interfered significantly with understanding. In those cases, I have placed a word or two in square brackets.

Research meetings were very lively and often humorous. Any dialogue transcribed in upper case is an indication of both high enthusiasm and volume. As dialogue generally occurred in a complex context, I have not added any notes or references to the transcriptions with the exception of references to a poetry arts-prompt I used to encourage participants to consider the varied cultural influences in their lives. If the excerpt was part of the poem read to the group I have added the note (from Participant's poem, "I am from"). Dialogue surrounded each poem and they were interspersed with explanations and additions, which is why I chose not to show each poem separately, but rather in the context of the manner each participant chose to share his or her poem with the group. An explanation of the poetry prompt, process and context follows in section 3.B.iii.

4.a.i. Anahid

Anahid, the Armenian background participant, is a first generation Canadian born to parents who immigrated to Canada from Armenia. She grew up in Montreal and was surrounded by a large Armenian immigrant community that gave her a sense of belonging and tradition. Anahid's mother was a teacher and was concerned that her children take advantage of both French and English as well as learning to read and write Armenian. As Anahid was growing up, she went to both Anglophone and Francophone schools at her mother's discretion and, with other children of immigrant parents, attended Armenian language school on Saturdays. She remembers Sundays as filled with two central identity-creating activities: attending the Armenian Orthodox church and socializing with her extended family.

> Apparently there were 1000 churches (in Armenia in the 5th century). It's just to show how important religion was and how central to the being... of Armenians...So if I had to choose one thing that represented my culture, that was central, that would be it. Because throughout the wars and genocides that happened to Armenia because of its location, the beliefs that conflicted with everyone else, the religion kept them going. The belief in God and faith. So whether or not I am religious, it has almost nothing to do with it. The Armenian community centre is part of the church. It is all the same building. You can't say you aren't going to church because you are just by being there...

Belonging to the Armenian church appeared to create some tensions for Anahid, since she spoke on several occasions about how she had trouble reconciling the beliefs of Armenian orthodoxy with her vision of the world as a place for people of all races, religions and creeds, a place where there is a plurality of experience that has characterized her most positive memories about growing up and encompasses the way she sees herself.

> I like the idea of citizen of the world. That's come up a few times. I like to think of myself as being a "typical" Canadian from other cultures. I speak both official languages and my own language, which I read and write. And I look the way I do and...so I don't know what to call that. (pause) Canadian. I'm typical Canadian.

Many of Anahid's childhood memories revolve around family meals and foods specific to Armenian culture.

> And food was an important part of our meetings together so there was always the table and I remember my favorite dishes when the family would come over.
>
> I am from pilaf and kabab, apricots and nuts, yogurt. Some grains. Feasting or fasting. Salty and sweet. (from Anahid's poem: I am from...)

In one of several food-related incidents, Anahid recounted her discomfort in the staff room of a school she found hostile, saying that it was often easier just to eat in her classroom than to have her lunch serve as an object of either the curiosity or ridicule of colleagues. As an antidote to this problem, Anahid went out of her way to bring her students' attention to cultural aspects of daily living, such as the Arabic and Armenian scripts on the outside of a pita bread bag and a little explanation about breads from around the world.

Other cultural identity attachments for Anahid are rooted in Armenian melancholy music with its history of survival of ongoing colonization and war. She is knowledgeable about Armenian folk music and brings music from a variety of cultures into her daily classroom teaching. Anahid has worked as a music specialist in several schools and currently teaches grade 1 where she incorporates music, multi-lingual teaching resources and as many images of diversity as possible into her classroom.

Anahid grew up with friends from a variety of races and cultures and was comfortable learning about others and befriending people across difference. She describes her parents as strict and traditional with specific rules and codes of conduct that she was not always able to apply outside of the family/Armenian context. Even so, her particular position as bridge from her parents to the new world and from the new world to her parents and Armenian community gave her tools of social analysis and flexibility that she put to constant use. Anahid's willingness to experience new things and to be patient with intercultural discomfort took her all over Canada to study and live, and to other countries to travel. She spent time teaching and living in an Aboriginal community and wrote her Master's thesis about music and cultural performance from the Aboriginal community in which she lived.

Anahid married outside of her culture, to the initial dismay of her extended family.

> The term for non-Armenian is "odarge" which means foreign. So it's so ironic because when my husband, who is not Armenian, when I met him, my parents said he was "odarge"...I don't use that term, but, ah, I noticed a while later that "Wait a minute, that means foreign. But actually, Allan is born in Canada! That makes us foreign, actually, Mom, it makes YOU foreign, not us..." (burst of laughter from research participants). But I can't discuss that with my Mom (others nod in agreement).

Anahid has found it difficult to live and teach in western Canada. She experiences many tensions both personally and professionally between what she would like to be living and her actual experience. Her desire to know herself culturally is strong and she longs to establish meaning and congruence between the many cultural aspects of herself.

> I guess I have been struggling with this a lot. I was born into an Armenian family. Raised in Montreal, in Quebec, I learned French and English and I guess it has confused me. Like I'm not sure who I am. I even think my country is Montreal! But I've never even been to Armenia. But if I go, I might not be able to relate to Armenians either. I don't know if I'm expressing this properly...

She spoke several times about needing to go back to Montreal from time to time to feel that she belongs and to be in a place where she sees other people who look like her and share some of her cultural understandings. In the West Anahid's longing not to be so "obviously" different at every moment of the day expressed itself in taking every opportunity of estrangement to try to find other Armenians. One incident about looking for Armenians in the west is particularly poignant:

> When I came to Edmonton, people would ask, what origin are you? And usually people say, Armenian, what's that? I say it's not ROMANIAN, it's AAARRRRmenian! (laughter) and so then my follow up question is always, do you know anybody who is Armenian? And finally I met someone who said "Oh yes I know an Armenian person." And so they gave me the phone number and I called this guy, and this Armenian lady. And they took me in like family! This woman said "come to my house I've prepared this Armenian food" and we couldn't go because Allan

> was sick and she called to see how he was – "Maybe he had a heart attack, you know you have to be worried about these things…" and I'm thinking, maybe this is TOO MUCH like family!!!! (laughter) I mean this lady I'd never even seen just took me in you see.

4.a.ii. Eric

Eric was born in Malawi and after a change in regime, his family moved to Halifax in Canada so his mother could complete her Master's degree. The family moved to Edmonton when Eric's mother began her PhD. At that time Eric was in high school and attended the same school where he began his Edmonton teaching at the onset of our research project. As a child, his memories of Halifax were mostly struggling to try to understand English and turning to soccer to make friends. Language was not an issue while playing soccer.

> Most of my friends played soccer. I played soccer as a young kid. I think we were talking earlier about something that defines yourself and myself, (I) like sports. And soccer. That's how I met all my friends through soccer and just interacting with people that way.

Eric recounted his High School experience as being one of a very few visible minority students and his home life as assimilation into Canadian life more than anything else. During university, Eric played in sports teams that allowed him to travel in North America and Europe, which he really enjoyed. After graduation, he moved to Toronto, Ontario for his first teaching job, which he described as a shock. Eric's teaching assignment was to a mostly white school where he was the only Black teacher – a repeat of his high school experience as a minority student. The school nearby in the same system had a very diverse student population, more problems with student poverty, and no visible minority teachers. Eric's attitude, however, is that you teach the students you are assigned to teach and he threw himself into his work with great enthusiasm, working for four years at his assigned school and making close friends among the staff.

He told the research group an interesting story about how the students in his school "assigned" a visible minority student to him by repeatedly telling Eric that a boy from Iran was his "favorite". The following is an excerpt from that story:

> Well everyone kept telling me that he was my favorite student. All the kids thought that he was. I remember the very first day of school. He's Iranian. First day of school, they had to line up in the class. And he knew who I was and said he was happy to be in my class. That was the first meeting. I taught him in grade 6. He was a great kid. He played sports. We got to know each other that way. And the second year it happened that he was also in my class. So all the kids were saying "Oh you switched grades so you could teach (name of Iranian student)" (Laughter).

Eric explained that visible minority students were always very happy to have him as a teacher and would come regularly to his class to talk to him. White students were also attracted to Eric, which led the group to a discussion of how visible minority teachers, and particularly if they are male, seem to be important role models for students.

> Eric: So in connection with that, well there was another kid, he was Black and he was from Egypt. So I had kids who looked up to me in a sense and talked to me before school and after school. So like you say, well the very first class that I taught, I had these two boys and they liked me. Well, there were white kids in that group too.
>
> Marie: They all liked you.
>
> Eric: Ya, I taught them in grade 6 and when they graduated in grade 8 it was a very emotional thing. Kids were crying and hugging and very emotional…
>
> Marie: I know it's terrible (laughter).
>
> Manzi: I thought it was me alone! (laughter).
>
> Eric: They change so much and then grade 8 happens and you just cry. So ya, those experiences, it has been a combination of both: I would have loved to have more impact in another school [with more visible minority students], but it wasn't that I didn't like the school where I taught. I had a hard time leaving those kids. They were great kids.

A question that came up frequently for Eric was "What is traditional Malawi?" His experience with his family was trying to survive in a new country, so as a young adult Eric wondered what he missed from his heritage that could give him a stronger sense of self. Eric spoke about an older brother who came to Canada much later and who served as a bridge for Eric to understand some of the things his parents spoke of. This only piqued his interest to know more about his country of origin and the role tradition could or should play in his life here.

> "What is a traditional Malawian family?" What is that is a question I have for myself. Because you can be from Malawi, but all the families are not the same. And they come from different areas with different traditions – from the south or from the north. Lots of dialects and ways of doing things. So what is a TYPICAL Malawian way of doing things? What is that? I guess you start defining that when you move here. But I'm asking myself, what is that?

Eric engaged the group with the idea that belonging had to do with how much one understood about a given social context. He asked if it was possible to feel secure and confident individually while not belonging collectively.

> Let's say I go to visit Malawi, but people see me as Canadian and here I'm not assimilated because people think well, maybe I should go back to Africa. So in a sense like, as an individual you might feel rich, but as a collective, in a group, where are you gonna' fit in? That's the interesting part.

In this respect, Eric had a similar dilemma to Anahid who also expressed confusion about who she was and how she should fit in to a context where she always looked and felt like an outsider. It appeared that Eric's main connecting threads with regard to making sense out of his experience were his interest and skill in sports and his family. Eric's two primary influences in his decision to become a teacher came from his coaches and his mother.

> Since growing up, I've always had coaches. Not only did they care about how well you played, they cared about us all as people and they really inspired me. And this is a picture of my Mom at her graduation. She has always been an inspiration to me. She has always been striving to get an education; her Master's and then her PhD. So that also inspired me to become a teacher. That's how I see a teacher, always helping other people. That's how I want to be.

Another influence for Eric was his fiancée, who like Anahid's husband, was from a different race and culture than Eric. He spoke on several occasions about trying to understand weddings from Malawi and other cultures, something that was surely on his mind since he was soon to be married himself.

> I'll use marriage as an example. When people are getting married (in Malawi), it's usually the community that takes over the marriage. The couple doesn't do anything. Everything is in place.
>
> …a couple of weeks ago, my fiancée and I went to a Sikh wedding and, um, we went to the, um, temple…Gudwara, right. The men had to be covered – their heads, I mean. And women

> and men didn't sit together. I kind of knew some traditions but not enough…we really didn't know what was going on…And living in Mill Woods, there is so much ethnic variety. You are going to have friends that are from a different religion than you and you will have to be visiting their house, you may go to a wedding or something and you have to know how to deal with it…
>
> Also we went to an Ismaeli wedding. That was different for me too. Luckily I had friends who came and explained it to us as it went along. That made it easier for us.

Eric's confusion about cultural and religious practices that were different from his did not stop him from participating wholeheartedly in celebrations with his friends. This willingness to try new things and to experience difference was, like Anahid, characteristic of Eric. He spoke of how he enjoyed foods from all around the world, traveled as much as he possibly could and enjoyed participating in various cultural activities. At one point Eric talked about a Caribbean celebration he attended in Toronto:

> They have steel drum contests. And costume competitions…There was this little kid with this great big huge thing behind him and this mask. It was great.…What I noticed is that you don't have to be Caribbean. You just join in. You make your own costume. It's lots of fun.

He actively tried to cultivate this love of diversity with his students by presenting them with different scenarios and a multitude of perspectives, learning to use drama in his classroom teaching and taking students on field trips to places where they would have to deal with life in new ways.

> So at the end of it one kid put up her hand "So does racism still happen today?" I tried to think where she was coming from. For her, she wasn't aware that racism is happening around her…That opened my eyes a little bit. Most of these kids haven't ventured out of their neighborhood. They think everyone lives the way they do. And it's kind of funny but at the end of the year, there is this amusement park and we had to take the public transport to get there. Some of the kids had never been on the public transit. They didn't know what to do with the bus tickets! I had to explain it to them. And the bus went through Chinatown and just seeing the life there, these kids, their eyes – like what's going on? They were almost in shock.

Another recurring theme in Eric's discourse was that of respect for his elders and appreciation for what his parents went through to give their children a better chance in Canada, deep appreciation for his family.

> I don't know if it is Malawian. I see it in other kids from Africa. You don't call someone by their first name even if he is two years older than you. You call him uncle. And if someone older comes into the room, you just move over or let them sit.
>
> I am from a Malawi family; Awila. I am from a Canadian family; Awila. I feel like I am from the same family but different places,

> each part equal. We celebrate both cultural things and things that are important to our family and to me. I am from a loving family, an embracing family…(Eric's poem "I am from…")

Eric spoke frequently of looking for discrete ways to show sensitivity to his students. One example was how he made an appointment with a refugee student to show him how to program his cell phone and to explain things about how the school system worked so the refugee student would not feel so helpless in his new environment.

The school in which he taught in Edmonton had a higher percentage of Black youth and Eric expressed concern that these youth forge an identity for themselves independent of the media images of Blacks that they see regularly.

> Kids get trapped in what is stereotypical "African American". Not what is African. When kids come here they think "I've got to fit in so I'm going to act African American" and they do assimilate. And that affects them. And it affects the way they might respond to the parents when the parents try to tell them "This is how we do things" – the kids think "Well this is what I see on T.V." or, "This is what my friends say I should be, or act". That's how I see it. Even growing up I found it troublesome. Sometimes you meet a friend and they notice you are Black and they say "Hey do you rap? Do you do this or that?" and I say, "I'm African, not American!"
>
> I don't know if it's a phase but the "in" thing now is to act Black but African American…as a teacher I go "What ARE you

> doing?!!! That is so stupid – why are you even trying to act that way?" But kids want to fit in, so if you are Black and you don't fit into that hip hop identity then what are you? You have no identity so you fake one.

4.a.iii. Genesse

Genesse immigrated from Cameroon to Montreal, Canada in her mid teens. Her English was not as strong as her French, so some of her contributions to the research conversations were in French, which I translated so Eric could understand. She spent five years in Quebec and attended the University of Quebec where she found adjustment difficult. For Genesse it was particularly frustrating to speak the same language as the Quebecois while feeling so misunderstood. Additionally, Genesse found the teaching style here very different from what she had experienced in Cameroon. She married a Cameroonian man who worked for the Canadian military, taught adults at the National Defense and gave birth to three children. After moving to Edmonton, Genesse decided to go back to school at the Campus Saint Jean to obtain her Bachelor of Education. Genesse related that as a youth she found the immigration experience new and exciting but she only came to grips with what it would be like to live and work here when she was in her undergraduate education program. It was during that period that she began to think about culture and its significance in teaching and learning.

> I decided to be a teacher. I have to go back to school, to education, just to understand. Because I am here in Canada for a while, it is better for me to understand how things work here.

> At that moment I decided to be a part of the society. Before that I was just "visiting" (nods, agreement).

As the research progressed, Genesse's courageous approach to life became more and more obvious. She threw herself into learning about education with enthusiasm and zeal.

> I was not shy to ask questions and sometimes people would look at me like I was strange that I didn't understand. But I didn't [give a damn *trans.*] what they thought. I had something to learn and I was going to learn it. But I didn't know that I had something to offer. At the second year when I saw my marks I said "Eh, Genesse, look what you can do!" I was so proud. I had great marks. I was determined to find out what was going on and to be a "part of the gang". Sometimes it was horrible. But you know it's true that through difficulty you find your voice.

Genesse had a negative experience during her final student teaching placement where she felt criticized and undermined by her cooperating teacher.

> …if [my supervisor] hadn't kept telling me I was capable…I don't know what I would have done. Now I can laugh, but when I see [her] I wasn't laughing at all. I was crying. I got into that woman's classes (the cooperating teacher) with "two knowledges" but I left with "one". She was SO MEAN. At that time I had a culture shock. I thought "Genesse, all those years at [this institution] you didn't learn a thing! You can't teach anything!"

This experience was so demoralizing for Genesse that she felt completely broken and had to go back home to heal and re-establish her sense of competency. In Cameroon, she regained her confidence and began to think about all the things she had to offer as a teacher to Canadian children. Genesse told her parents she had to go back to prove that she was a capable teacher; a decision her parents supported. Upon arrival in Alberta, she marched into the superintendent's office at one of the school system offices and said they should hire her because she was a good teacher who had been disadvantaged by a negative cooperating teacher. She refused to show the evaluation her cooperating teacher had written and explained the situation to the superintendent who told her he appreciated her honesty. Genesse kept on calling and visiting the superintendent's office until he agreed to give her a job. She then made a conscious decision in her first placement to use her cultural skills from her own traditions, for example singing and storytelling. One story recounts how Genesse calmed her students before an exam, which led into a statement of how she sees her role as teacher:

> I can see in the class when the exam approaches the students, they get stressed. I begin to sing and to make them laugh. Then I pass out the exam copies and they are happy and say thank you. And for the little ones I always tell stories. They love it. I try to share my background with my students…they are very curious. They ask me everything: where were you born, how do you eat, what kind of food do you have in Africa, do you miss home…A student was asking me so many questions. He wanted to say “Bonjour” in my dialect. For weeks he would only say “[illegible]léa” every day when he met me at the door. At the end of

> the year, he wanted to visit Africa. He said "Yes, now I have to go and visit Africa". And that is the kind of citizen I want to create in my teaching. It is not a citizen of Canada I want to create. Not a citizen of Africa. I want to create a citizen of all the world who just looks at you and sees a person. A person who has a ton of things to offer.

Genesse was very definite that the motivating reason for her choice of teaching as a career was to be a better teacher for her own children. She shared with us that she was the daughter of a Chief, which made her a princess, and that she was proud to share her heritage with her children. As a part of their cultural education, Genesse made a conscious effort to take her children to Cameroon to make sure they had a sense of where their roots were. At the same time, she recognized the importance of Canada for her children and valued what they could learn here.

> It is complex when you have children. Because I have to teach my children my identity from Africa. I am an African woman!!! That's who I am!!! I was born there and raised there. All my values come from there. It shapes me and I try to teach that to my children – to take the Canadian culture and the African culture. You have to put them together. Culture A and B equal C!

She told the group that her oldest daughter would say one day that she was Quebecoise, then another day say she was Albertan and a third day proclaim that she was African. This did not bother Genesse because she saw it as a healthy attitude towards finding one's own identity and learning to belong. Genesse encouraged this kind of expression in her family so that her children would not be afraid to speak their minds and share their feelings.

Other identity strongholds for Genesse were her family, most particularly her father who had passed away a few years prior, the tradition of women helping each other (especially when a baby is born), and the significance of respect as a foundational quality for the development of a healthy community. Genesse shared many stories about traditions and ways of viewing the world from her home in Cameroon. Interspersed with the stories were contradictory readings of social traditions in Cameroon showing conflict between ancestral practices and Christianity. For example there is a tradition in Genesse's region concerning appeasing deceased ancestors to remove the effects of bad actions:

> Genesse: There is a thing you have to do. One time, my uncle had such a family fight and they told him he had to go where his ancestors were buried and talk to them and bring red palm oil, feed the whole village, give the oil, bring lots of chickens. And there are things you throw into the wind.
>
> Marie: A ceremony?
>
> Genesse: Yes a ceremony.
>
> Marie: You have to show good will and then do a ceremony?

> Genesse: But if there is one ancestor who is not satisfied, it is not good.
>
> Marie: How do you know what a dead ancestor wants?
>
> Genesse: A seer. A clairvoyant. But sometimes those seers are not right, it is just their imagination, superstition. My mother said you shouldn't believe that. She says she is a Christian and that (the practice of the clairvoyant) is just superstition.

Genesse's strong sense of justice permeated everything she did. Although she expended considerable energy to show colleagues she cared about them and to be friendly and warm, if she felt she was being mistreated, Genesse did not hesitate to confront the problem. She spoke at one meeting about a colleague who was lingering in the classroom to watch Genesse teach instead of leaving when it was time for Genesse to work with the class. After a few classes Genesse found this very irritating since the colleague appeared to be purposely making Genesse uncomfortable.

> I remember the Dean of the [institution] saying "We are all professionals, we all have our rights" and I was feeling very strong. Then I got very angry. I AM A PROFESSIONAL!!!(she gets up to demonstrate). I give the assignment to my students and then I go right over to her and talk too loudly. It was a stupid thing to do but I wanted to make sure she really understood. I was mad (laughter). I said: "(Name of teacher), the bell has already rung. This is my time with the students. Take your stuff and leave!" (huge laughter).This teacher, she is

> a woman with lots of influence in the school. And in my head I was HOPING she would put up a fight! I was ready! I had the ATA code of ethics with me and I wanted to prove my point! (huge laughter as Genesse puts up her fists and pretends to fight). Come on, come on. I AM READY...You could see she was surprised. She just lowered her eyes and say "O.K" and leave. Since that day, she is super nice to me.

4.a.iv. Manzi

Memories of childhood were evoked for Manzi through a creative visualization and drawing activity we did at the third research meeting. She talked about growing up in Burundi because her parents were in exile from Rwanda. She spoke of growing up with war constantly around her and people she loved always "disappearing". Even so, she felt protected by her parents who went to great lengths to try to keep the children away from the atrocities of war and enlisted their older children in the "don't tell the younger ones" family project.

When Manzi was four she was so determined to go to school that the school allowed her to join a class of older children. Manzi's memories of her first teacher, Madame Valerie, were especially vivid. She felt that this teacher awakened her love of teaching because of both her love of children and her use of innovative methods to keep students interested in learning.

> So if she wanted to teach us the letter "A" she would write it on a board but cover it with a curtain. We could see the letters through the curtain and we were curious to know. And she

> would say the words that start with the letter "A" and she knew that when she opened the curtain we were so curious to know that we would remember it well. I used to like it.

Manzi came to Ottawa as a refugee from Rwanda in 1994. During the genocide, Manzi was working for an airline, married and with two children. Many of her family members were killed and when she found out she was next on the murder list, she took the first plane with her children to New York and from there to Ottawa with only $100.00 to her name. Upon arrival, Manzi told the cab driver that she was a refugee and didn't have money to pay for him to take her to a hotel. The taxi driver subsequently drove her family to a church that helped refugees. Every day Manzi would catch glimpses of the massacre happening in Rwanda from television and radio and she felt that she had died inside. After two difficult years in Ottawa, and a library search to find another place to live in Canada, Manzi and her two children moved to Edmonton. From the start, she showed great capacity to survive against the odds, visionary thinking and strength of spirit.

> I came here by choice, no one forced me. I kept saying "You have to make it. You have two kids and you have to raise them". I looked in the phone book and saw some names that were Rwandan. I called them and they came to see me.

Knowing that she would have to understand her new country, Manzi decided the best way to proceed would be to volunteer at immigrant serving volunteer agencies where she began to make friends and joined a church. From there she went to NAIT and completed a bilingual business administration program but was not satisfied that she had found meaningful work. Manzi decided, as did Genesse, to enter teaching as a way to help her children succeed. Contrary to Genesse however, Manzi had very supportive and caring cooperating teachers.

> I haven't had, haven't been in a classroom like the classroom you see here with the decorations…everything was new. Still today. But I said "I'm going to make it". The best part was my practicum. I happened to have nice teachers…but I really didn't understand and sometimes I would ask them questions and the way they would look at me, I would know that the answer was that I should already know that! I could see they were shocked by the questions I was asking but I didn't care much because I really wanted to learn.

She gradually became aware that those experiences where she felt unsure were related to cultural difference, but she found that she had talent for helping children with difficulties to succeed and gain in self-confidence.

> I did come to understand that there was a difference in culture after some time. But I didn't realize, for me I used to sit down and say, "I usually learn so fast. Why is this not faster?" But it was difficult to explain what I didn't understand and to explain to the faculty what I was going through. My practicum ended up like 90% me learning and 10% teaching but I said, "Whether you like it or not, I really learned and I'm going to use this in my teaching". But the reason I didn't get discouraged is because I LOVE kids. Some children were not very connected to my

> cooperating teacher, so I said I would rather teach those kids. When she was teaching, I put my chair in the middle of those three kids so I could help them. During recess, music, whatever, their teacher allowed me to work with them. By the time I was finished my practicum, they were doing so well, even more than the other children. One of them, she draw a heart and say, "You are the best teacher in the world!" ME! A best teacher!

But even with the support of her cooperating teachers, Manzi felt she lacked confidence, felt deeply sad, and like Genesse, went home to re-connect with those of her family members who were still alive in Rwanda. While there she decided that her teaching degree could serve her well for the children of Rwanda and soon after her return to Canada Manzi started a non-profit organization to help the widows and children of Rwanda.

> Before I went back to Rwanda, I was so sad…I thought, I'm a single mother and everything…but when I saw what the people were living there…Women had been raped and they now had HIV, their kids had been killed and they had nothing. They came together to form a group called Women of Courage and they took kids on the street who don't have parents. If they had four kids, they would take four kids off the street and take care of them like their own. That made me say, "You are so lucky. Your children have a shelter. You live in a wonderful country. You better be strong and help these people." So I started a society "Rafiki" which means "Friends of Rwanda". It dissolved but I didn't stop there. I went back to see these women in

> November to teach them about HIV - and the children – they told us they would do the work, that if we helped them we would not need to come back again because they would do the work.

Back in Canada, Manzi concentrated her efforts on learning to be a good teacher and finding ways to help the women and children she had met in Rwanda. Her teaching experience in Alberta began as a substitute teacher in French Immersion and Francophone classrooms. She landed longer and longer contracts at various schools and during our research was awarded a contract in a remote rural school, where, like Genesse, she and her daughter would be the only Black people in the community. The teaching contract involved a move that made it difficult to attend research meetings. Additionally, both Manzi and Genesse were teaching special summer camp classes for immigrant children to help them catch up in their school work which made it even more complicated for us to meet regularly as a research group. Even so, Manzi saw the research as an opportunity to learn, to share her experiences with all of us, and to begin to improve the current situation in Alberta for immigrant families and their children in schools.

Much of Manzi's associations with her past were painful and involved losing friends and relatives through war. Yet soon after her arrival in Canada, Manzi found friends who reminded her so much of her family and friends, that she believed she had found her true home here. Manzi told her brother that she felt Canada was home, she loved it and she needed to live there.

> Things that happen to me, sometimes I don't feel them the way they are until after a long time when I go, "Ah, that was horrible!" But I don't want to feel anything that will make me feel that this is not home. I met people here, when I look at them, it is funny because they look like people I lost during the war. I have somebody, she looks exactly like my cousin – and she is a white lady! I never told her but I really like to look at her because she reminds me of my cousin.

> I am from Canada. Surprising, eh? A country that offered me my first citizenship, gave me a real name, rather than the name of "refugee" that I carried for more than 30 years. I am from the human family. A family that celebrates life, that preaches love in action, a family that believes all human beings are equal in the eyes of the Creator…I am from people who believe in peace. And people who want to influence the world. Especially children, influence them to positive action… (from Manzi's reading of her "I am from…" poem)

4.B. Remembering and identity

4.b.i. Landscapes of identity: memories of home

After the introductory session where participants spoke generally about their lives and teaching experiences, I became interested in finding out where research participants may have attachments to geographical places. To access this inner space, I engaged participants in a creative visualization that allowed them to access memories of place and space. They closed their eyes and imagined a first and then a second place they remembered from their lives. There was no direction as to where participants should direct their thoughts. They were to feel, smell and sense their surroundings and greet friends in whatever place of memory they chose. Following this 10 minute visualization experience, participants used chalk pastels, tissue paper and glue to create some aspect of their imagined places with the understanding that they would show their "places of memory" to the group.

After about 20 minutes of creating in relative silence, participants explained their visuals to the group, allowing comments and questions after each explanation. From looking at the drawings, it is clear that had I wished this activity to succeed artistically, I would have had to provide more instruction on how to use the materials for maximum effect. But what was important was the explanation about the drawings and the meanings participants attributed to various aspects of their drawings and visualizations.

The following images are scanned Black and white images of participants' pastel and chalk drawings from this exercise:

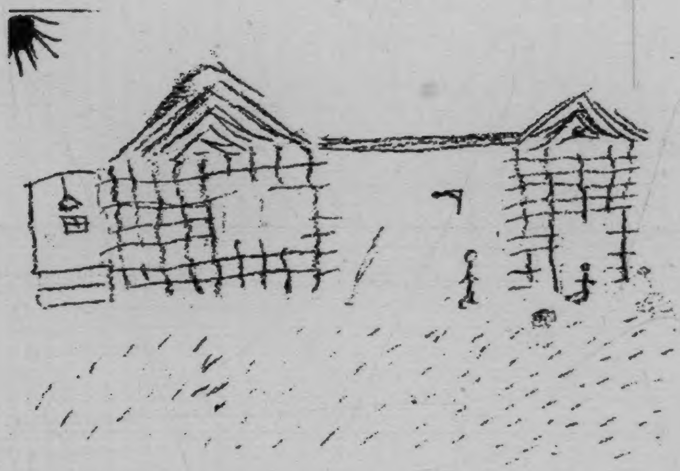


Figure 1Eric

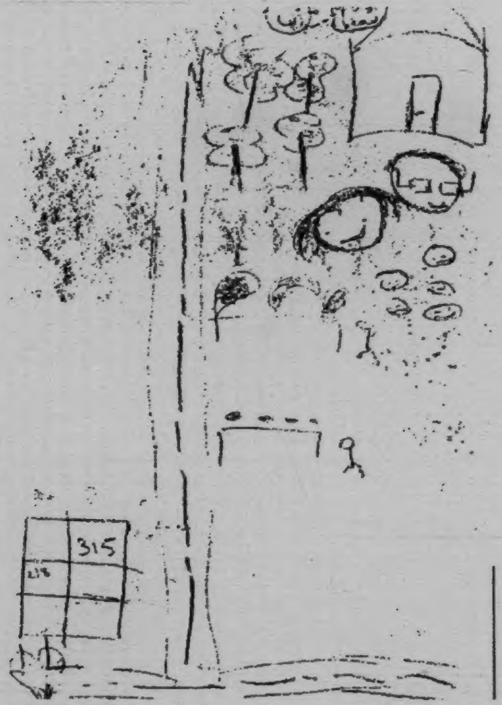


Figure 2 Genesse

Figure 3 Anahid

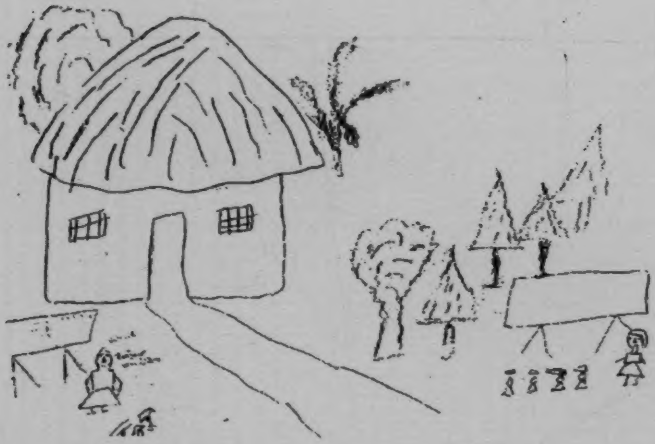


Figure 4 Manzi

All four participants imagined childhood homes with happy memories as a first location of identity. Genesse spoke of the many trees around her childhood home where she used to hide and dream. She mentioned the long driveways with vendors selling their wares. A lot of detail was in her childhood home, which had added significance because her father had been buried there several years ago. There

was less detail was in the small drawing of Montreal on the bottom of the page, it was distinctly square and looked like an afterthought in comparison to the rest of her drawing. When we asked Genesse about this she replied:

> The thing that is interesting here is the road. For me is like the same country and we are all on the same road. The driveway goes to the street. That is the connection. The road.

Eric drew what he remembered of Malawi with a big house, tall grass and time spent making toy cars out of wire with his friends. He also talked about the house he lived in while teaching in Toronto. Both places featured sports and games with friends and both were happy memories. He explained that he didn't draw his first home in Halifax because it was lonely for him then.

> I think it was kind of a definite moment when I came to Canada. Because I didn't know anyone here and back home I was more active. More outgoing. And here I held back. So I kind of developed a different part of me because of the situation.

Anahid also drew her childhood home with great detail full of flowers, relatives and outdoor meals (not visible in the scanned drawing because of the light colors she used). Of particular visual significance was the large figure of her father, who like Genesse, had passed away several years ago. Anahid's intention for the second half of the picture was to draw the Quebec wilderness where she used to go camping and to add her husband to the composition.

> It was peaceful and secure. I guess security is really important to me because it comes up in everything I'm doing here…happy times, safe places, outdoors usually. I was going to draw Allan in here as well, but Allan never met my father before he passed away so it would be an impossible picture. And all the flowers and tomatoes – everything is in bloom at the same time - which actually couldn't have been real.

Manzi drew her house in Burundi and explained the story of her four year old venture into school with Madame Valerie that was mentioned previously in her introductory narrative to the research group.

> And see here there are no friends in this picture. Because some of them got killed. Even her (Madame Valerie, Manzi's first teacher). I don't see my siblings, my parents because they are not alive. But you see the road. And the road is getting bigger when you come to Canada.

The emphasis on both Manzi and Genesse's pictures other than homes were the roads leading to Canada. Eric and Anahid's visuals did not have roads and showed more aspects of nature around the homes. All four pictures had people in them. Manzi's drawing showed Madame Valerie and her students. People in the other three drawings showed family and friends.

Although the drawings and their explanations were interesting, it was the next two research meetings that brought visuals and identity stories into a much sharper focus. I asked everyone to bring something visual that had personal cultural significance for them. They could interpret the request any way they wished. Eric was the first to be ready with this and he put quite a bit of time and effort into making a computer collage of various images that provided us with a cultural portrait of himself. He included a flag of Malawi and a reference to his dual citizenship, pictures of people playing soccer, souvenirs of places he had visited while traveling, his favorite color (blue) and a metaphor for his parents:

> Here I have a man and a woman wearing chicken suits that say Mom and Dad. And I thought it is funny but I wanted to have that because after moving to Canada, my parents played several roles for us. To help us. Getting odd jobs. Having an education doesn't always transfer – you have to do different jobs. I wanted to show how much work they've done for their kids, like in these costumes it is like playing a role, whatever you need to be, to do, so your kids can grow up.

This comment received quite a bit of attention from the other participants who identified Eric's comments of appreciation and respect for his parents as one of his recurring themes. Other participants brought cultural artifacts to share with the group as their interpretation of "something visual with cultural significance for you". Genesse brought articles of clothing and accessories from Cameroon, Manzi brought two Rwandan wooden milk jugs and Anahid brought a CD recorded by her Armenian cousin that included her picture. The first theme that emerged from participant explanations about these artifacts was how mundane articles such as clothing and household items take on a kind of sacred and symbolic significance when in a new geographical and cultural context.

4.b.ii. Talking clothes, some artifacts of memory

Genesse brought a number of clothing articles from Cameroon; a green dress and head scarf , a man's hat and a shell necklace. The women's articles belonged to Genesse's mother and had strong family memories. The dress, in particular led Genesse into an explanation of the meaning of traditional clothes in Cameroon. Various patterns and styles communicate to people your desire to promote peace or integrity or could denote, for example, that you are a married woman. Men's hats have particular patterns indicating their status in the society and imply certain status related greetings and deferential behaviors. Genesse told the group she occasionally wore the green dress or the head scarf to school and that her students loved it when she did. She also explained an incident that prompted her use of the shell necklace when student teaching:

> So I had that (the shell necklace) for 12 years but I forgot until I was in my practicum. When someone bring that necklace it means she want to be in peace. I talked to [my supervisor] and it made me remember this thing. [She] say to me, because I have this problem with my teacher, [she] say, talk to the students and have a meeting with them. Bring something for them to hold when each person is speaking (like a talking stone or talking stick) and if someone want to talk, he will take it and talk. When you say that to me I think, oh, I have something they do not see very often. Maybe we can be more open to speak and to learn. I go back to my school and open my bag. They

> say "OOOOH! What's that?" I tell them the story about these things from my country and they ask questions and we talk for an hour. I say "You know I bring that because I think things are not good in our class and I would like to change things. And you are allowed to say what's going on and what change you need. And they speak more open. I was listening to them and also thinking about my country. When I was young, I see people talking and passing around this necklace to speak...and this help me to resolve our problem. I think from that time that the things we do back home can help me to solve problems here.

In response to that story, Anahid explained that when she was working in the Niska Valley with the Aboriginal people, red and Black clothes had special cultural significance. It so happened that Anahid wore those two colors together often because of personal preference, having no idea that the culture in which she was living was observing her. At one point she received a comment from a community member that indicated people were happy with Anahid because she was wearing their colors, which they understood to be a sign of cultural solidarity; it showed she was "in tune" to them. Although this was an unintentional act on her part, the comment made Anahid conscious of how much she was being watched by her host community and to what extent the details of her life were being judged as either tuning in to or tuning out of Aboriginal realities.

4.b.iii. Disclosures of belonging in family, culture and community

What is traditional? How do we belong…anywhere?

What ensued in the remainder of the conversation stands out for me as one of the significant moments of our time together. Manzi shared the story of her mother communicating her will to the family before dying in a very touching Rwandan tradition, explaining the meaning of her mother's changes to the tradition and how that impacted the family. She spoke of her painful work with the Rwandan widows and the misunderstandings Manzi has endured from her family, which were put to rest when her mother spoke her will and testament on that day. We talked about the experience of healing when children have been forced from their mothers to be made into soldiers who maim and kill their own people. Genesse spoke of the death of her father and how it dramatically affected their family across continents. Of Cameroonian norms, ceremonies and superstitions and trying to make sense out of all this in Canada. Eric, Anahid and Manzi talked about longing for people from their cultures and taking personal risks to find connections with something familiar. The spirit of sharing and respect for these disclosures of longing to belong, of estrangement from family, of the continuous presence of death in life, were felt deeply and affected the direction of our subsequent dialogues.

Although it is difficult to separate the conversation into themes, issues pertaining to Manzi's story of her mother's will and testament will be explored in more depth in the next chapter. In keeping with the idea of landscapes and artifacts of memory, however, I will explain the process and role of a subsequent arts prompt to reveal the tacit among research participants, and to promote bonds of shared understandings between participants for further inquiry.

The arts-prompt I had planned for the artifact session served as closure for the profound exchange between participants as they revealed the significance of their artifacts. Following this two hour personal sharing, I asked participants whether they wanted to discuss articles they had read about culture and identity or proceed with an arts closure activity. After the intensity of our prior discussion, all chose the arts activity with relief and were enthusiastic to try it without prior knowledge or explanation. It is interesting to note that this attitude was in direct contrast to my previous pilot study research group with white teachers. Participants of this study participated enthusiastically in all arts activities and would willingly have spent less time talking and more time creating, given the opportunity. This is interesting to me because my pilot project group of white teacher participants expressed high levels of anxiety and lack of confidence with regard to arts prompts. Perhaps this is due to the more unaffected way in which singing, dancing and other arts activities, had been woven through the cultural experiences of all four participants. Manzi, for example told the group that she had always sung throughout the day and upon coming to Canada started to feel self-conscious about singing. She commented, “Only when I came here I realized that you have to have a good voice to sing”.

The arts-prompt in this case was to write a poem on the topic “I am from” (Linda Christensen per Saldaña, 2000) and to read the poems to the group with commentary. The exercise involves writing four responses to the following prompts:

I am from (write foods you eat or ate at home)
I am from (name artifacts found in your home)
I am from (write about your neighborhood, community)
I am from (your heritage, religion, ancestors)

Although it may seem trite to give this kind of a rigid format to participants investigating a topic as complex as cultural identity, I have used this poem in a variety of circumstances with a similar response: participants show a sense of personal investment in culture and group bonding is increased as personal connections become more real and explicit. For us at this point in a place of emotional intensity and vulnerability, this activity served as closure, additionally prompting a discussion on how there could be space for interpersonal and cultural sharing in schools. It was at the next meeting, however, that we agreed upon a statement about the power of metaphor for cultural memory:

> Culture is reflected in the things we use for daily living, and the clothes we wear but we don't realize it until we go somewhere else. Out of their natural context, these daily objects take on meaning and become metaphors to us for who we are. Everything we see, hear and sense around us is rooted in cultural response (from research synopsis #4).

Multiculturalism has often been criticized as remaining on the surface of cultural encounter by focusing on dance, dress and diet (See for example Hay, Khalema & Van Bavel, 2003). In this context, it is interesting that participants chose to bring those very references, outer manifestations of culture, to the attention of the group in order to reference themselves and reveal to others how they wanted to be known, to be recognized. The artifacts of clothing and household objects were not put on display to be admired from the outside and relegated to the exotic and the curious. On the contrary, they were doors to hidden meaning, cultural norms and places of security and attachment for participants.

The understanding that these objects took on greater status and significance when they were removed from their natural surroundings, prompted discussion at subsequent meetings of how cultural groups within families appear to form overblown attachments to details of cultural identity that would have been of much lesser significance in their home countries. Examples that came up were: excessive strictness of parents in their desire to protect children against the cultural influences of Canadians especially with regard to clothing and friends, decisions by Muslim women to wear the hijab in Canada when they had not worn it in their own countries, and undue control over wives and daughters when immigrant husbands/fathers felt unable to achieve economic parity with non-immigrant men. Participants agreed that it would be more logical for immigrants and other marginalized groups to hold fiercely to preservation of language, religion and cultural practices that brought a sense of group solidarity and enjoyment, such as folk dance and culture-specific sport. Instead, within the family setting, the stress of continuous newness and threat to cultural survival appeared to have the effect of reactive control over non-essential cultural details. This point has been reiterated in research about immigrant settlement and trans-generational tension between immigrant parents and children (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2006; Larkin, Friedlander, Newman & Goff, 2004).

At a point during our third research meeting, conversation began to circulate around how one belongs in a world where everything changes, people travel, immigrate and marry outside of their racial, religious and cultural backgrounds. Eric's question about what is traditional Malawi began this discussion:

> I wanted to know what is traditional Malawi. There is no traditional...well there is a traditional way, but there are different ways within those traditions...so I don't know what I was asking. IS there a traditional?

Tensions of tradition/modernization and belonging within local and virtual contexts were woven throughout the research process at all subsequent meetings and appeared to change in importance depending on the horizon before us, the people with whom we found ourselves and our responsibilities towards them, perceptions of opportunity and threat, and the practical realities of day-to-day existence. I had recently engaged in a discussion with my Kenyan colleague about female circumcision and asked the research group what they thought about this issue. Genesse said she thought female circumcision was just another way to subjugate women. Manzi tried to explain why people hold onto these kinds of practices according to her experience of going to school in Kenya for high school.

> The first time I heard that women could be circumcised was in Kenya. Because people were still doing that – the Masai people. They are modern. They go to school and can be doctors in the capital city. Over the weekend they go home in the Masai land and you wouldn't recognize them. They are

> more “local” than the locals. And that man won’t even say no to that tradition. That is why it is so complicated in Kenya. People who are educated will never say no to a tradition in their land even though they know they should not do it. People hide it.

As we remarked that the attachments of culture can sometimes be very surprising and perplexing Manzi elaborated:

> Well when I am here and I think about my culture and the things they do, I just say “Wow. This is not a good way of doing things.” But when I am in it, I find myself doing it. Even though I know that it is not something I would like to do. Then I question myself and ask why I am doing this. Even social life. Social life is a good thing back home. Let’s talk, let’s cook, let’s eat. But you find you are wasting a lot of time…so when I find myself wasting time, I just find an excuse and go. Some of my family will say “She is too white”, but it is true. I won’t say that all my culture is good. But also I cannot accept to be assimilated. Sometimes I get frustrated.

Genesse, on the other hand, believed she learned to blend the two cultures in her life by remembering how she did things in Cameroon and then learning something new from Canada, then giving to Canada what she knows from her culture. She said, “I am not feeling that I am a stranger, a foreigner. Here in Canada I feel rich”. The following comments are a condensed version of the ensuing conversation about how to belong when one has a plurality of experiences:

Genesse: I feel I have to catch up and learn more when I go home. When I went back three years ago, I didn't understand anything. Why are the roads so dirty? Why don't you pick up the garbage? Why is there mud everywhere and the roads so bumpy? I grew up in that place and I didn't think it was dirty!!!Now I do! When I go back I always feel like I am missing something. That is why I have to go back home each summer; because everything I bring makes me richer here.

Eric: You see one way and ask is that the proper way of doing it, but when you think that way to suggest to other people who haven't experienced it they say "What are you talking about? This is US". So you feel like you don't belong. Lost.

Genesse: I don't think I can be lost. Because in the middle I found the good in each one. This makes a wonderful soup.

Eric: Well, maybe for the individual it is good to think that way. But when you think about belonging that's when it becomes tough.

Anahid: I was dreaming about belonging and Montreal and one school I worked at and I felt really comfortable there. I didn't know the staff that well but because they were so diverse, I just felt comfortable. I can say that I felt 100% that I belonged in Montreal, because it is so cosmopolitan.

Manzi: When I went to Ottawa, I wanted so much to belong to Canada. If I had a way of doing it, I could even erase myself

> and start a new me with no history. But it didn't happen. In Ottawa…every day they were reminding me who I was. I was afraid that if I stayed there I would be an immigrant forever. When I went to Edmonton it was snowing and cold. But inside me I said "This is home". Deep inside me I was saying "You have to belong here". Guess what? It was only six months that I felt I finally was home.

What is interesting about the these excerpts and the preceding statements, is that various seemingly contradictory aspects of belonging were expressed. Belonging was connected with knowing what the cultural norms are and conversely with being surrounded with so many different kinds of people that a new group norm is able to emerge. It was connected with being able to combine who one is with new surroundings, with trying to erase oneself to start over and with pride in cultural, linguistic, religious and racial heritage. It was connected to gender roles, family, kinship and social status. Finally, it was connected to frustration with trying to communicate with others who cannot think outside of their own cultural experience to even understand that these dilemmas exist.

This latter theme came up very frequently in our research meetings and became an ongoing question for participants. They asked how to help other colleagues learn to think outside of their own cultural experience so as to be more in tune with the realities of their students, they expressed solidarity with the disconnect of trying to live in several cultural worlds with significant others who had only the experience of one, they talked about their experiences with immigrant parents of students from cultures that were very different from their own. What emerged most frequently as a response to these tensions from the immigrant teachers was that one has to *work* at belonging. This initiated a short disagreement between Manzi and me that illustrates the sense of freedom with which participants felt they could express themselves to the group and the degree to which they believed they could disagree with me:

> Manzi: We come from the third world. Sometimes when you talk about third world, people see poverty and underdevelopment. But the third world has good stuff and also needs to be modernized. We come from the third world and all of a sudden there is this big gap that takes every aspect of life: social, financial – every single thing we have to live here is in that gap. So that is why you have to accept positively all the frustration you are experiencing in your teaching because you have a baggage of culture and tradition. You have to look at it and say, "Am I going to take this with me or not?" And move. And it takes time, one, two or 20 years. But we have to be willing to meet that world, you understand?
>
> Marie: It's not right that you should be doing all the moving. And maybe this world is not all right either. Capitalism is not the be-all – it is corrupt. Both sides have to move. Like what Genesse said, A plus B equals culture C…there is this desire to move towards what is western and frankly what is "white", but you know what? It isn't all that great!
>
> Manzi: What I am saying Marie is that would be the ideal to be sensitive and to meet in the middle.

Marie: Move together towards global prosperity because individual prosperity just ends up being greed.

Manzi: Yes, but it will never happen. I'm not going to force this world to come to me. I choose this home so who has the work to do? It is me, yes it is true!

Marie: If I invite you to my house then I have a responsibility to you. So if Canada says welcome to our house, we have a responsibility to you. If you are the only person who has to move it is wrong.

Manzi: Let me tell you something. Canada says welcome and that doesn't deny that responsibility. But they are doing it at their own pace. And I am doing it at my own pace. Do you understand? I am not looking at this like you. Even if it is one person out of thousands, I will take it as the whole country welcoming me. I am very strong. So I meet people who do not want to welcome me, I just leave them aside. You can't expect everyone to be welcoming…with the people who want to move I say, "Hey we can move together!"

EH!! This country is so beautiful. I have good things here. I don't even know how to measure them. If I compare the war I came from, my own people who chased me and tried to kill me, killed my family. And then I come here to people who don't know me and they aren't even the same color as me and they accept me. I lived three years in Canada without working while I

> was studying and I was eating. That is something. There is a big difference. That changed my life (silence).

The concept of "It is me who has the work to do" in order to belong, was not so readily accepted by the first generation Canadian teachers Anahid and Eric, who had grown up in multiple worlds. Their ongoing frustration with working at belonging was more complex to them than to the immigrant teachers. Although they welcomed newness and appeared to seek multicultural experiences to add on to those with which they were already familiar, and although they wanted to see themselves as proud global citizens, the words, "confusion", "lost" and "difficult" emerged more frequently from the visible minority first generation Canadian teachers than from the immigrant teachers. More and more it appeared that the strength of spirit expressed in so many ways by the immigrant teachers, was nurturing the first generation Canadian teachers, which was surprising to everyone and developed an even stronger sense of cultural pride in the immigrant teachers.

4.C. Tensions of Belonging

4.c.i. Landscapes of memory and belonging in Canadian post-colonialist literature

The connection between landscapes of memory and identity is a recurring theme in post-colonialist Canadian literature according to Genetsch (2003). "The absence of Canadian experience corresponds to a focus on memory work, which is an important aspect of the lives of minority communities and deserves, indeed demands, to be studied as Canadian experience, too" (p. 7). He goes on to elaborate that multiculturalism focuses on the "here" of immigrant experience and its historical repercussions for those of recent immigrant issue. Postcolonialism on the other hand, focuses on the "there" of one's ancestral roots and history in another set of landscapes. In post-colonial literature one finds "the desire to come to terms with oneself in place and time and in relation to others" (p. 8) and a movement back and forth between here and there to find strictures of meaning and identity. Sullivan (1988 cited in Genetsch, 2003) explains:

> The mental landscapes of the writers have two poles: *there* and *here* – but this is not a cheap polarity of eelgrass and snow, of a vapid idealized image of a past that is the focus only of nostalgia and a simplified alienating here. It is tougher than that. *There* and *here* are interlocked: the work is continually shaping and being shaped by the need to view *here* as possibility (p. 7).

Genetsch illustrates his idea of the memory landscape in fictional writing of Canadian post-colonial writers Vassanji, Bissoondath and Mistry. According to Genetsch, that there is a memory/narrative connection with the homeland as well as an active response to the "new world" in immigrant writing is a manifestation of the diverse identity constructions with which we are all confronted in Canada. It centers upon a discourse of difference that is manifested differently by each of the above authors.

> My working hypothesis is that Vassanji emulates cultural difference but eventually transforms it, while Bissoondath configures cultural difference in terms of group difference against which he posits the difference of the single individual begging to differ. Mistry, finally, reflects a certain awareness of

> cultural difference but offers vistas beyond postcoloniality by taking recourse to cultural exchange but also to humanist positions (p. 11).

As Genetsch proposed above with regard to published postcolonial Canadian writers, participants in this study also had a variety of contexts to their queries of how to belong *here* and *there*. Points of tension were teased out through a combination of arts prompts and collaborative conversation. Chronologically, the research progressed gradually from personal narratives and musings on the effects of culture in personal and professional self-concept, to specific disclosures of places of memory and significance which revealed tacit understandings and opened those understandings to group exploration. Although parts of this deepening process were initiated through arts-prompt activities, other parts emerged spontaneously or were highlighted thematically in the research synopses, which were read at the start of each research meeting and reviewed by participants for accuracy.

4.c.ii. Discussion **of participant narratives: recognition and redistribution**

Participants' desire to belong can be interpreted as being rooted in the dialogic nature of the recognition/redistribution paradigm. They wanted to be recognized for who they were in all their uniqueness, yet at the same time, did not want this very uniqueness to be used as an impediment to equitable treatment and life opportunities. Further nuances of the recognition/redistribution concept can be found in Genetsch's hypothesis of how three post-colonialist writers broached the dilemma of belonging in a multicultural context through difference. "Emulation of difference which is eventually transformed", is more typical of Manzi's position; "cultural difference in terms of group difference, against which is posited the individual who begs to differ" can frame both Genesse and Manzi's stories; "reflection of some degree of cultural difference yet moving beyond postcoloniality to cultural exchange" more closely characterizes Anahid and Eric's tensions around belonging.

Because what is familiar in the Other can combine and juxtapose with awareness of traces of Otherness in oneself, participants were not willing to polarize their experiences under the singular category of race. Their musings on how the "here" and the "there" of their lived experience play out in both their personal and professional lives, are more suited to the experience of ethnicity, within which race issues could also be considered. Genetsch (2003) writes:

> Ethnicity accounts for "human variation in terms of culture, tradition, language, social patterns and ancestry, rather than the discredited generalizations of race with its assumptions of a humanity divided into fixed, genetically determined biological types" (Ashcroft et al. 1998, p. 80). Influenced by the work of Stuart Hall, Werner Sollors and others, ethnicity has been reclaimed as a marker of difference that relies on categories which are applied as much by the group that regards itself as belonging to a shared ethnicity as by the society at large. As it is a category that is not imposed from without, a great advantage of ethnicity is that it allows for "an identity that cannot be denied, rejected or taken away by others" (Ashcroft

> et al. 1998, p. 80). Whereas membership to an essentialist category such as race consigns one to a particular group, ethnicity stresses that belonging to a collective relies on affiliation, i.e, the will to belong. Furthermore, because it is "relative to time and place" (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 81), ethnicity is also a category of difference more flexible than race in that it allows for [a] dynamics. In other words, the subject is not only free in deciding to which ethnicity, or ethnicities, he/she belongs, the very nature of ethnicity both allows for changes of what constitutes a particular ethnicity and for the subject changing from one ethnicity to another" (p. 30).

4.c.iii. Cosmopolitanism

To continue to link this discussion with participant stories and the constructs of ethnicity, I would like to look more closely at some of their commonalities within tensions of belonging. On the surface, each participant is attached in different ways and in varying degrees to racial, cultural, linguistic, familial, gendered, geographically situated, diasporic/migratory and religious affiliates. Each of those "belongings" holds tensions and conflicts as well as places of pride, resonance and stability. Taken separately participant narratives have few commonalities. One is a refugee, two others immigrants from Malawi and Camaroon each arriving in Canada at different ages, yet another was born in Canada to Armenian parents. Each has a widely different experience and came to teaching, with different subject matter expertise, for very different reasons. None can claim appropriate recognition or redistribution as Canadian citizens or as in-service teachers, yet all make claims on the importance of both which will become more apparent as their disclosures are probed.

What I would like to focus on from the earlier narratives is a distinctly articulated concept each participant made to what is greater than their particularities, their common human experience, differently lived, as world citizens. To use a popular terminology, participants showed themselves to be more or less *cosmopolitan* in their views of themselves both in their private and professional lives. This sense of capacity to project themselves into the world across borders permeates their collage of cultural experiences and helps them to make sense of a multiplicity of identity attachments.

Cosmopolitan, Kleingeld and Brown (2002) tell us in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, means *citizen of the world*, which refers to those within all societies around the world who believe that humanity is part of a single moral community. It stands in contrast to tribalism, patriotism, nationalism and fundamentalism, which claim either local, national, ethnic or religious identifications as more central to identity than universal affiliations. Those who propose a cosmopolitan agenda, according to Kleingeld and Brown, have tastes or considerations for cultures other than their own cultures of origin and are characterized as worldly, sophisticated and having a wide international experience. Cosmopolitanism can be traced back to the Greek words *cosmos* (or world) and *polis* (meaning city and citizenry), used by the Stoics and Cynics to describe universal love of humanity. It currently takes several forms either as *cultural cosmopolitanism, philosophical cosmopolitanism* and *political or sociological cosmopolitanism.*

According to Kleingeld and Brown (2002), cosmopolitanism in its cultural form may be perceived of as love of humanity as a whole above love of one's own cultural group(s). In its philosophical form, it proposes moral universalism whereby all people come under the same human rights standards irrespective of culture, religion, sexual orientation or social class. It is associated with such institutions as the United Nations or the International Criminal Court as well as global NGOs and transnational social movements. Within the political realm, cosmopolitanism proposes a world of plurality of states that would work together to pursue such cosmopolitan projects as global environmental codes and international environmental monitoring systems, ventures towards an equitable global economy and the establishment of international human rights checks and balances (Kleingeld & Brown, 2002).

Kreigman (2006) focuses on the significance of cosmopolitanism to identity and points to the ramifications of such an expanded form of identity development:

> The identification of oneself as part of the human family, with responsibility for one's brothers and sisters, is an extension of the sense of kinship many already feel for their nation, hometown, and family...The emergence of a global identity is a new implicit social contract in which increasing numbers of people understand themselves practically and aspirationally as *global citizens*. They share the broad values and principles that would underlie a transition to a just and sustainable planetary society, such as human rights, freedom, democracy, pluralism, and environmental protection. This new global identity need not
>
> subsume or eliminate particular subglobal or group identities, although it would certainly transform them (p. 6).

He is quick to point out however, that this kind of identity expansion does not necessarily overcome historical antagonisms nor does it stop the messy processes of "wars, genocides and subjugations" as people grapple with local, regional, national and international spaces of identity fraught as much with fear of difference as desire to know and to be known by others. It is within this difficulty that a critique of cosmopolitanism can emerge. One might argue that smaller affiliations such as national identity, are more important to individual identity than broad, universal affiliations, and that one's loyalties towards the smaller affiliations are intrinsic or fundamental to human nature.

Iyer (2001) writes poignantly of the discomfort that can occur at the expansion of identity, when he considers "the enduring fear that diversity can just lead to disorder…The mosaic becomes a collection of jangled shards, more than likely to draw blood…" (p.40). He considers simultaneously however, the significance of creative living in the spaces that are sites of human interaction yet to be built. On this point he notes "Most of the creative energy in our lives, as individuals and as communities, seems to me to come from the gap between categories, the life between the cracks" (p. 50), and he refers specifically to Canada as a testing ground for cosmopolitanism, which he ennobles with his phrase "the global soul".

> In certain ways this sense of imaginative space seems particularly made for a Canada that has always occupied a relatively neutral space in reality and in imagination: a version of Europe that doesn't think everything has to be the way it was yesterday, and a part of North America that doesn't expect everything to change tomorrow. The refugee or immigrant, it almost goes without saying, lives in that very space, too, the

> space between the home he's left and the new life he's hoping to create" (p. 50).

Cosmopolitanism then, as cultural, philosophical and political/social generally characterizes the world views of all four participants in this research. Although each comes from a particular experience, and angst over where to belong with such mixed experience frequently surfaces in participant comments, the common desire to use this plurality of perspectives as teachers to "create citizens of the world" was articulated and re-articulated throughout the data.

4.c.iv. Créolisation

Each actor's sense of self includes a combination of personal and cultural characteristics which, combined with the experience of migration or exile, of travel, learning multiple languages and adjusting to multiple world views, has produced a version of cosmopolitanism similar to Françoise Vergès's (2001) concept of the project of *créolisation*, or the "browning" of the world. I am particularly interested in her idea of Creole cosmopolitanism because three of the four research participants are francophone and have aspects of francophone colonization in their histories and three are Black from African countries. All four, irrespective of language attachments, are conscious of the influence of marginalization, colonization, displacement and domination on their sense of self in the world.

Vergès writes that Creole cultures emerge as a survival response to destruction, erasure and continuous adjustment to imposed change. In her view, Creole intellectuals developed identities that needed to find a larger human space, beyond national and ethnic constraints within which some sense of stability and influence in a locally chaotic experience could be secured. It is important to note, however, that this multiplicity of human experience projected into the bigger context of world citizenship, does not lose cultural distinctiveness to a whitened and toothless multiculturalism, deny history and racism or on the other hand, undermine agency. Rather, the goal of creolisation, according to Vergès, is to bring back to the world that which has been taken from it through war, domination, slavery and colonization; a process she calls "remondanéiser" – to re-world, and to re-world through legitimizing the experience of brown-ness.

One hears the remondanésier motif in Genesse's description of her student teaching experience: "I came with 'two knowledges' but I left with 'one'." Determined to overcome the humilation and sense of loss she felt with her cooperating teacher, Genesse's overt use of her cultural strengths in her teaching and her vehement rectification of situations of prejudice with colleagues shows how she projects herself as a change agent into the Alberta school context, doing her best to bring her experience into parity with that of the dominant school discourse. Why? Because according to Genesse, her own Black, African experience in the Albertan context is a tool to render her students and her own children more cosmopolitan in their outlook.

> "I am an African woman! That's who I am!!!...It shapes me and I try to teach that to my children – to take the Canadian culture
>
> and the African culture. You have to put them together. Culture "a" and "b" equal "c"!

She states, “It is not a citizen of Canada that I want to create. Not a citizen of Africa. I want to create a citizen of all the world who just looks at you and sees a person. A person who has a ton of things to offer”. These pronouncements resonate with Vergès’s idea of Creole cosmopolitanism that seeks to bring back to the world what it has lost from the Black and brown races and cultures, to value and cherish the contributions of all races and all peoples through projection of the Black experience into the world’s concept of itself.

Manzi too, is engaged in “re-worlding” her school space. Perfectly conscious of her pivotal role in paving the pathway for other Black teachers in French Immersion and Francophone schools, she strives to alert her students to the injustice of all kinds of marginalization wherever it shows itself, and to do her part to redress whatever harm has been done in the recognition of the talents and capacities of her students. She works to provide students with tools to succeed and helping them to overcome obstacles. Students of all colors seem to sense that Manzi is a model of how to turn barriers into opportunities for growth. She talks of forming friendships and alliances across racial barriers to the point of considering her white friends as “replacement” family members for those relatives she lost to war.

> I met people here, when I look at them, it is funny because they look like people I lost during the war. I have somebody, she looks exactly like my cousin – and she is a white lady! I never told her but I really like to look at her because she reminds me of my cousin.

Manzi deeply believes that her students are very fortunate to have her as a teacher because she brings with her the perspective that the other middle class Canadian teachers could never impart to their students: what it means to be Black, to be Rwandan, to live in a world of violence and terror and to emerge triumphant, a peacemaker, an agent for a just world. She is engaged, like Genesse, in the creolisation project of "browning" the world, of the double-edged cosmopolitan agenda of *simultaneously* bringing colonisers to account for injustice even as she is adopting their descendants into her life as family and taking on Canadian cultural characteristics with joy and enthusiasm.

Eric and Anahid's overt embracing of cosmopolitanism differs in some respects to that of Genesse and Manzi. Comfortable in strange circumstances and with things they do not understand, both willingly interact with other cultures and project themselves into cultural openings to find their places and to create new opportunities for interaction. Witness Eric's description of his participation in a Caribbean festival in Eastern Canada:

> It was great...What I noticed is that you don't have to be Caribbean. You just join in. You make your own costume. It's lots of fun.

Or his explanation of why he would use a particular book to describe various religious formalities with his junior high students:

> You are going to have friends that are from a different religion than you and you will have to be visiting their house, you may go to a wedding or something and you have to know how to deal with it...

Eric sees cosmopolitanism as what most children can look forward to in their adult lives. He wants them to be prepared to face a multicultural reality with enjoyment, confidence and skill; he is prepared to experiment with it and to model it to his students.

Anahid's projection into cultural newness can be seen in her decision to teach in an isolated Aboriginal community and to participate fully in the culture there. This experience prompted her to write a Master's thesis on the integration of music into living and learning in the Aboriginal community in which she lived. The effect of this local culture-specific immersion experience was to project Anahid more widely into the world; to consciously bring her multiplicity of cultural experiences from Armenian, French Canadian, Anglophone, Aboriginal and other multicultural friendships into her teaching so as to expose her students to "the world" to what it means to be "typical" Canadian "from other cultures" which she appeared to see as synonomous.

> I like the idea of citizen of the world…I like to think of myself as being a "typical" Canadian from other cultures.

Proof of cultural authenticity for Anahid was rooted in language proficiency, as well as physical attributes:

> I speak both official languages and my own language, which I read and write. And I look the way I do and…so I don't know what to call that. (pause) Canadian. I'm a typical Canadian.

For Anahid, to be Canadian, is to have multiple identity attachments and to be typical Canadian is to be a citizen of the world. Although she is not speaking of "browning" the world as Genesse and Manzi might, Anahid is conscious that her physical appearance serves a double function: both an impediment to recognition which is a constant source of frustration, and an asset to opening doors of recognition for herself and for other "typical Canadians from other cultures" through her teaching.

4.D. Professional belonging:

4.d.i. Tensions with colleagues, with school culture

From the very first research meeting, participants began to speak about their tensions with colleagues and how this affected their efficacy in the classroom as well as their sense of belonging to the school team. The four participants each had several years of teaching experience, Anahid just under 10 years, Manzi with the least teaching experience at three years and Eric and Genesse both in the middle with five years experience. All four were the only visible minority teachers in their schools and both Manzi and Genesse taught in schools with close to 100% white student populations. Manzi was the only Black adult in the town where she taught and Genesse together with her family were the only Black family until just a few months prior to the project when one other Black family moved to her town. All four talked at each research session about the discomfort of working in an environment where one is always "other" to everyone else. Their comments of frustration were usually paired with a telling complimentary experience highlighting circumstances where that discomfort was either reduced or removed. Anahid said at the first research meeting:

> I worked in some schools in Montreal with very, very diverse populations. Then I came here and it was a little strange because now I'm in [AAA town] which is mostly homogeneous. I'm actually the only person in the school, in the teacher population that is a visible, an "other", background. So, it's a little weird sometimes...

She spoke during this session and again at several other sessions about a particularly negative experience with a school in an Alberta city where Anahid felt obligated to resign because of the racial animosity she felt from the staff and the principal:

> ...but here, I found this school that was like Montreal, lots of immigrants and refugees. My experience was completely different because...every single teacher and even the Principal were from the same particular background – (they) have a certain upbringing and they may deny but it impacts them as a person and no matter what they say and how loud they speak, their actions speak louder...I saw other children experiencing discrimination like I have never seen in my life. It was like a bucket of cold water over my head. I can't even put it into words...I experienced a lot of intimidation and bullying...We have a long, long way to go here.

Anahid found judgmental attitudes from colleagues stressful. Frequently judgmental comments had to do with the food she brought for lunch, but also with whatever she would say, any opinion she would voice.

> If I spoke I was always hushed up. So I stopped talking because I was obviously getting into big trouble – but then when I worked in another school - there was some diversity there and I was happy.

Manzi expressed similar discomforts at the first research meeting. Her experience at the beginning of her teaching career led her to reflect on how things could be improved:

> We are new. The school has to help us by giving us mentors. We need people who can say, "I'm going to be with this person and teach them without prejudice". That is what I think.

Manzi made several references to the way teachers and support staff looked at her in ways that were disapproving and judgmental. She mentioned job opportunity sheets that were handed out by secretaries in Manzi's presence to all teachers without permanent contracts except her. She pointed out comments that indicated her colleagues thought she had no knowledge since she did not have *their* knowledge or life experience. She spoke of undue interference in her teaching, of colleagues regularly disciplining her class while she was present, of administrators screaming at her students and then telling Manzi that she needed to act in a similar manner to be a competent teacher. Not once did a colleague ask Manzi to tell her story, offer her non-judgmental help, compliment her or ask her to voice her opinion.

> There is a way to make you understand that is part of the way the school greets you, looks at you. They are not welcoming you and you feel that, so you do not know what to do.

> My cooperating teacher always wanted me to do things her way. I tried, but I couldn't. "Why do I always have to do things my own way?" I asked myself. But it is because I am ME! It is culture. It is me.

She spoke about teaching in a school for a few weeks as a substitute teacher and really enjoying being part of a diverse group where she could relax, let down her guard and not feel that she was under such intense scrutiny from her colleagues.

> I felt so good there. There was a big diversity. People from Poland, from the Caribbean, from all over. I really liked it because their French and their English were not that good so nobody was looking at anyone strangely. I wasn't happy because of the mistakes they were making, it was because they could speak other languages other than English or French. So when you speak more than three languages, it is very hard to say you know one language with no mistakes. So I felt more comfortable. Also you could see that teachers were working together, understanding each other. Multiculturalism was lived. Other schools talk about it, but there it was lived.

Genesse told the group that both at her first placement and when she first started teaching in her current all-white school, everyone would give her a very wide berth in the hallways as if they were afraid of touching her. Additionally she put up with ignorant or racist comments that were frequent during the first two months at her new school. From her perspective, colleagues appeared not to trust that she was a competent teacher, and contrary to Manzi who had no offers of help, Genesse was overwhelmed with unwelcome offers to help her.

> I had lots of terrible comments in September and October. "Oh can I help you do this? Can I do this for you? Do you know how to do this?" They were scared of me and they thought I was strange...

Genesse bemoaned the narrowness of cultural experience of her colleagues as she experienced from their comments about Black children in the staff room during her first long term placement. Colleagues would talk negatively about Black students in front of Genesse as if she wasn't there, which infuriated her. They also came to Genesse with problems they had with African students as though she were an expert on all Black immigrants and had answers at her fingertips. This was in direct contrast to other staff comments directed at Genesse which insinuated that she was not a competent teacher. She wasn't sure why she was considered to be incompetent and at the same time an expert on everything Black. At one point Genesse decided she had had enough.

> One teacher say, "Oh the little boy – the parents come from Africa. And Genesse, I don't know how to deal with THOSE!" And I say, "Who do you call THOSE!" really loud and everyone stop and look at me. I say, "Yes, who are you calling THOSE?" She say, "O.K. I didn't want to say it like that - I don't know how to deal with "that" so I wrote a note to the parent and they didn't sign the agenda". I say, "SO?!!!" They think I know everything about every African! Every African is different! Like what Manzi does, I don't do.

Over time her colleagues' attitudes of fear and mistrust changed during the course of Genesse's first year at her second school. Her principal told her at the end of the year that he was very happy to have her on staff. This was just the comment Genesse needed to feel that she belonged.

> Genesse: My principal say "I am so happy to have you - See you next year Genesse!" and I feel SO SPECIAL!

Like Genesse, Manzi mentioned that she had been personally impacted by teachers' negative staff room talk about immigrant students. Additionally, Manzi's teenaged son complained to her that teachers he didn't know would approach him and warn him that he wouldn't be getting away with anything if he were ever in their classes. As a mother she was frustrated that her son was labeled before he had a chance to prove himself or to make good with a different teacher. One of the repercussions of this ongoing negative school experience for him was continuous argument with his mother about his education. She realized that the problem was not only with her son when he explained the systemic marginalization he experienced:

> My son told me, he was going to school and having some problems. He was misbehaving. I told him "Don't you know (how to act in school)..." and all this, and he said to me, "Mom, sometimes the teachers who I don't even know come to me, because in the staff room they talk about us. They come to me and say, "How you behaved last year, now you are going to see me already angry!"

Both Eric and Anahid mentioned that they were discouraged by negative staff talk about students but they did not associate this uniquely with race or ethnicity, rather they mentioned that negative talk about any student made it harder for that student to succeed in a given school. Manzi then added two stories about white students who were from families with problems that her colleagues told her not to bother with. Her response to any colleague telling her that a student wasn't worth her time and effort was to quietly go and work with that student to prove to everyone that the student could be successful. Her methodology contrasted with Genesse who, although working individually with problem students to help them succeed, tended to confront staff members with their negative comments as part of her plan to help colleagues understand the long reaching consequences of their words and attitudes. Manzi, on the other hand, preferred to work quietly on her own and to protect both herself and her students from the negative attitudes of others.

Eric, contrary to the female teachers in the research group, did not mention feeling uncomfortable with other staff members although he did say he felt that he was in shock when he realized he was the only visible minority teacher in both schools where he had taught. In some ways Eric appeared to have been a kind of celebrity with colleagues. His gentle and accepting nature combined with his expertise in sports won him many male friends on staff. Eric's love of games gave him a way to equalize the difference between himself and other male colleagues. It is not clear that this was also the case in his relationships with female colleagues. Because Eric was used to having to negotiate his way in an all white environment he had perhaps learned bridging skills the other three had not developed to the same extent. On the other hand, his bridging skills appeared to be most developed with regard to both gaining approval and friendships from male colleagues and attracting the admiration of male students. The research group noticed this and discussed the importance of visible minority male teachers for male students generally, both to counteract negative Black male stereotypes and to provide role models for the boys.

Anahid was so used to a diverse environment as a child that she felt the rigidity of a homogenous environment combined with judgmental attitudes from her colleagues frequently more than she could bear. She mentioned eating alone in her classroom and being hesitant to share with colleagues regarding either her "different" approach to teaching or the excellent website of multicultural teacher resources she had designed.

Contrastingly, Genesse and Manzi had their personal culture shock to deal with as well as the double role of trying to negotiate their own children's passage through schooling as minorities while seeking commonalities among colleagues. Although Genesse was both courageous and friendly in her relations with others, it took her principal's overt recognition of her professional capacity after frequent visits to her classroom (apparently he observed her class at least once a week), and a congratulatory compliment at the end of her first year in that school, to give her the assurance she required to believe in herself as a teacher. To feel that she belonged, Genesse needed to have her particular voice heard. The effect of being acknowledged as having a unique contribution was for Genesse to see herself as an invaluable member of the "team".

Manzi mentioned that there was pressure from the staff for her to visit with them in the staff room. She preferred, however, to work with the students during recess and noon hour because, she stated, that was her reason for being there. Even so, her previous comments about the negative looks and comments she was subjected to could not have made staff room socializing a high priority. Striving to make the classroom a home-like and welcoming place was her noble desire for the children, and may possibly also have served as a self-preservation strategy:

> The teachers told me to be more friendly with them. I know what they mean, they are also important, but I am working with my students. This is my way. I have to first understand the people I am responsible for. I have to make my classroom home. That is where my heart is.

Out of the four participants, three felt uncomfortable in the staff room and in their dealings together with colleagues most of the time. Eric tended to keep busy with coordinating sports activities during noon hours and before and after school, but managed to spend time chatting with those colleagues whom he described as inclusive, after hours, even sometimes far into the late afternoon. He mentioned sitting on the floor in the hallway with several other colleagues talking “shop” until 6:00 one day when the principal told them, “Don’t you guys have a home? Go home already!” Eric also met with colleagues in non-school settings to play games together and to socialize.

One reference he made to a Black teacher friend of his indicated that his friend did not feel connected in the same way with his colleagues. He suggested that this friend was perhaps too vocal in his desire to let colleagues know about racism and oppression of marginalized groups and that this alienated him from his staff since they came to see him as always having an agenda. Eric’s friend was an immigrant teacher and although technically, Eric is also an immigrant, the fact that he was young when he came to Canada makes his attitudes more similar to first generation Canadians than immigrants. It is possible that there are accepted gender roles for male teachers that transcend racial and cultural boundaries upon which Eric had learned to rely, since Eric was a very good observer of behavior. It is also possible that the sport/game setting in which Eric frequently found himself is a useful strategy in gaining male support in schools.

In contrast to Eric's more laissez-faire attitude towards colleagues and his speculations as to why his friend was not as socially successful at his school, Genesse's confrontations with staff appeared not to have harmed her relationships with them – rather her capacity to stand her ground and insist on equal voice and treatment earned their respect. Again, one wonders how much this has to do with the work that women need to do in order to gain credibility generally as professionals. In one school where I taught, I was regularly undermined by my principal until I stood up to him in a disagreement over my dealings with a student discipline issue. I confronted him on his lack of support, pointing out that when a male colleague had a similar problem he was supported by the principal. After this, he told me he was glad he had a "female teacher" with "spunk" and I noticed a distinct change in his attitude towards me for the better. This is similar to the experiences Genesse recounted in her dealings with males in supervisory positions over her; both principals and superintendents, but also with certain women of influence in the schools where she taught.

Confrontation was not Genesse's only tool however. She spoke about how she went out of her way to be friendly to staff and parents and to compliment them at every possible occasion so that if a confrontation occurred she had a positive relationship to fall back on. Both Anahid and Manzi made overt efforts to be supportive and friendly to staff; a practical way to realize their goal of building a supportive work community.

On the other hand, none of the female participants mentioned social activity with colleagues. They noticed personal slights and looks more than Eric and appeared to be more sensitive to exclusionary behaviors of staff. They also transferred their own experience onto potential repercussions of that experience for students. Anahid and Genesse did speak about making efforts to socialize with the staff outside of their "in the moment" friendliness, but these were usually overshadowed by their sense of responsibility towards their students and a lack of energy or desire to deal continuously with colleague ignorance about their race and culture. Outside of school, all three women participants had family responsibilities that would have interfered with extra curricular socializing. Both Manzi and Genesse were mothers, Manzi a single mother and Genesse married to a military man who was frequently out of the province or country. Anahid had to tend to her husband who had a number of health issues frequently involving emergency visits to the hospital. Eric on the other hand, had no outside responsibilities or family ties especially when he taught in Toronto where he actively looked for opportunities to socialize with people in his profession.

4.d.ii. Ways to belong, places to belong, ideals of belonging

It is interesting to look at the cultural belonging statements of each participant in contrast to professional belonging, sense of nationality and global citizenship. All four participants spoke passionately about their overt pedagogical agenda: to create world citizens who could relate to each other as equals and friends, who would know about the world, not just their own small part of that world. I would categorize this as an ideal of belonging. In a world where people frequently misunderstand each other and where ignorance and prejudice are a daily reality, visible minority teachers surely long for a truly multicultural world where deed and word are united and justice is central to relationships:

> Anahid: I like to think of myself as a world citizen... [pointing to the CD she is holding] This is a recording with songs from around the world. Students can put the headphones on and follow along with the text in different languages. Lots of folk tunes…stories from around the world. Not quite the WHOLE world, but a nice overview! It is important to widen their experience even just to open up that possibility and broaden their categories.

> Genesse: And this is the kind of citizen I want to create in my teaching. I want to create that kind of a citizen who is not limited. Is not a citizen of Canada I want to create. Is not a citizen of Africa. I want to create a citizen of all the world who just look at you and see a person. A person who have a ton of things to offer to others. That kind of person I like.

> Manzi: So today I see it as not only we will be teachers and building a bridge between our communities, but also we will – the children we are going to teach, will never be the same Canadian if they never had a teacher like us. It will open their

> eyes, the more they have these teachers, they will grow up with an open mind…They will see the world as it is with people and not have discrimination against different cultures. I think these children are very lucky to have those of us who are not from here as teachers. They will understand the world better because of us.
>
> Eric: Being a minority affects teaching. At least for me anyway, I will probably understand better that part of growing up in Canada. I also find that kids who have multicultural friends have an idea of what to expect in terms of – comments they make, an experience they had with a friend…Instead of having a one track mind about how strange it is when something is different. Parents who enlighten them about being multicultural. Reading books, watching movies. They may have bias but having that surrounding helps a lot.

Although this desire to influence students to be world citizens came in part from participant's own different cultural attachments and pride of cultural and racial heritage, they were adamant that it was not limited to the experience of one place alone. All four participants had traveled widely and longed to share this macro experience of the goodness of different places and different peoples with their students, colleagues and family members who had not had the same experiences. This sometimes caused inner and family conflict, because not everyone saw the need to expand their horizons as the research participants did. Participant's children also expressed fear of venturing out of the Canadian context that they knew and were far too rapidly absorbing negative societal attitudes and misinformation about Africa. As a response to this dilemma, for Manzi and Genesse, there was a conscious effort to work at belonging at the micro level; both returned home frequently so as not to lose their capacity to belong locally, in their traditional contexts, however much that traditional context could also be changing.

> Genesse: It is complex when you have children. Because I have to teach my children my identity from Africa. I am an African woman!!!
>
> Manzi: The reason why we focus on our children is that when we come here there is nothing else. There is just us and the children. And then we struggle in the life. So we are protecting our children. We don't want them to struggle the way we struggle.
>
> Genesse: This is why I need to go back home every summer.
>
> Manzi: To catch up.
>
> Genesse: Yes, to catch up.

Anahid and Eric, on the other hand, made frequent visits to Ontario and Quebec to maintain their sense of belonging there. All four participants had a sense that wherever they felt their roots to be, they needed to return occasionally to those roots to be nurtured and to get a break from being so "visible" here.

In summary, there were tensions in participants' talk about belonging in professional contexts, interspersed with examples of how schools can be more inclusive. There were tensions in trying to negotiate participant sense of self and assist the identity formation of their children with regard to culture and nationality. There were tensions with balancing the micro of local attachments of belonging with the macro of learning to belong to the world. On the other hand, an area that appeared to hold little tension for participants was that of nationality. They had no problem with having a sense of belonging to two or more nations. There was more overt patriotism from the immigrant teacher participants than from first generation Canadian teachers, although Anahid and Eric twice expressed pride in being Canadian. These two accounts were associated with the freedom one can have from war, torture and dictatorships in Canada and also with the opportunity to help forge a new country based on multicultural values.

An attitude of what I would describe as a pioneering spirit permeated comments about nationality. There is an excitement about being able to forge one's own identity in a relatively unfettered environment in spite of the manifold difficulties each participant experienced with regard to being in the minority in Alberta. Many immigrants have told me that only the courageous people from their countries come to Canada. I would add that it takes even more courage to find your niche in a profession where you will most likely be the only person of your color and culture for the majority of your career.

For all the participants there was additionally a sense of opportunity when many races come together and have to negotiate a third space in which they can live. This space appeared to be particularly important to Eric and Anahid, having overcome many of the initial hardships their parents first faced when coming here, whereas the tension for Manzi and Genesse lay in how much time and resources to put into maintaining ties with their respective countries, families of origin and projects to help people in their countries of origin. In Canada, Manzi maintained her cultural ties through teaching Rwandan folk dance to her daughter, nieces and other Rwandans. Genesse and Manzi used stories and examples from their lives in Africa as well as participation in Black cultural events in Edmonton with their children to keep their African identities alive. As was previously mentioned, both women maintained cultural solidarity by returning to their countries of origin with their children.

Both Manzi and Genesse frequently referred to their “struggle” and their determination to succeed in spite of the odds (“I will make it” was a favorite ending to many of Manzi’s anecdotes). Eric and Anahid felt they faced obstacles and difficulties but appeared not to be as seriously engaged in the struggle to survive as their immigrant colleagues. They were more likely to try things outside of their immediate cultural experience, to travel to new places and to vary their teaching methodology and approaches to incorporate all cultures. They were used to being uncomfortable, confused about their roles, and on the margins, yet did not consider this confusion such a bad trade-off for being able to learn about new places and people. They were not afraid to become cultural “translators” for compatriots on either side.

Conversely, Manzi and Genesse were more concerned about maintaining some sense of cultural pride for themselves and their children, while working furiously at adaptation to their new environment. Trying new things was less of a priority than looking for some community familiarity and solidarity and finding spaces to insert their cultural practices in their teaching. This was particularly important for them given their daily battle with being the only visible minority in their schools AND their towns. (At the time of the research, both were in that particular position. Their prior teaching experience however, had all been urban with similar, although not as demarcated experiences.)

All four encouraged others to try to see things from new perspectives and actively shared their cultural understandings with people they thought would be receptive. There was a stronger sense of mission to share cultural values, norms and artifacts from the immigrant teachers and a stronger sense of desire to have students partake of the multitude of cultural delights available to them in the world from the first generation Canadian participants.

4.E. *Discussion* about professional belonging and tensions of belonging

Ghosh and Abdi (2004) write that it is inevitable and unavoidable that minority individuals and groups define themselves in contrast to the dominant culture that surrounds them. Whereas white Canadians may never have to confront their differences of experience with visible minority Canadians, visible minorities are constantly in a position of having to justify their attitudes and actions as well as having to frame their experience against a backdrop of whiteness. Canadian researchers Schick and St. Denis (2005) explain:

> A dominant group is positioned to define itself as a blank, unmarked space vs. a marked outside "other." The unmarked norm is the space of privilege, an identification that gets to define standards according to itself (p. 299).

According to Schick and St. Denis, this whiteness backdrop is for most Canadians a convenient way to neutralize the effects of systemic marginalization of teachers and students of color under the double assumptions of benign Canadian tolerance and the "clean" or "slavery-free" history of Canada. The one tolerating is in a position of privilege and knowledge that subsumes difference as un-recognizable or negligible. The "tolerator" is seen to be morally superior through toleration of difference, for example, in the way one would tolerate someone with garlic breath, or the tolerance of two year old temper tantrums.

With regard to the assumption of social purity, Canadian schooling has for the most part conveniently erased all episodes of racism from the consciousness of the "average" Canadian educator. From the exploitation of Chinese railway workers, to the genocidal practices continuously imposed on Aboriginal peoples, to the incarceration of Japanese Canadians during World War II to the refusal to accept Jewish and later, Pakistani refugees by returning their boats to sea for passengers to perish, to the exclusion of Black pioneers from the city of Edmonton…(Cameron, 2004), the list of Canadian discriminatory practice goes on and cannot be denied.

Visible minority participants in this research study have had to negotiate their lives both personally and professionally through an attitude of erasure and moral superiority that permeates Canadian ethos. As can be observed from their comments and frustrations, this has not been easy or without personal pain and sacrifice. Two researchers on the experience of Black American teachers, Jean Madsen and Reitumetse Mabokela (2005) cite the following excerpts from teachers they interviewed:

> The other people (European American colleagues) are monocultural. I have had enough white associations. They are the ones that have few Black associations. I am the novelty to them. They are not different from me. I am different from them. I get tired of that (p.18).

And from another interview:

> The other day I was really loud and I thought, "I'm that typical Black person." I am just trying to be myself. I am always saying to myself, "Don't lose your identity when you get out there." It's kind of hard because then you want to watch yourself to make sure you're not being loud or have white people say that's how Black people act (p. 17).

If schools are to become more equitable, to reach Fraser's (2002) ideal of parity of participation, the history of those who have suffered from racism in Canada and the ongoing marginalization and systemic discrimination of visible minority Canadians has to be recognized. Recognition of suffering is part and parcel of recognition of cultural difference and of awakening empathy and mutual understanding.

Canadian administrator Christopher Spence (2002) writes:

> A stated goal of our multicultural Canadian society is equality of opportunity. Anti-racist education can help us realize that goal by enabling us to analyze the barriers to equal opportunity. It points to structures in our society and relations between the powerful and the powerless which must be changed if we are to achieve true equality of opportunity p. 161).

And again:

> In this era of malice and greed, teaching requires a moral courage that is tragically unfashionable (p. 18).

But tensions about race are not the only places of communication between research participants and their social interactions. Showing a remarkable resiliency and capacity to make friends, participants demonstrated that there is more to being a visible minority teacher in Canada than racial tension. Eric's ability to win the admiration and friendship of staff and students alike through commonalities of sport and game is a case in point. Another is Manzi's perception of her white friends as family. Or Anahid's creation of a French multicultural resource website to help Francophone teachers come closer to intercultural understanding. And what of Genesse's overt use of her cultural tools to help ease students' anxiety over exams? The spaces of human interaction are many and varied, and cannot be restricted to Black/white, master/slave, aggressor/victim dichotomies as Paul Gilroy (2005) explains:

> Antiracism seems very comfortable with this idea of Blacks as victims...Why should this be so? Suffering confers no virtue on the victim; yesterday's victims are tomorrow's executioners. I

> propose that we reject this central image of ourselves as victims and install instead an alternative conception which sees us as an active force working in many different ways for our freedom from racial subordination (p. 405).

Indeed the participants of this study do not see themselves as victims, rather, in spite of difficulties, they have cast themselves in the role of liberators and project themselves upon the world as new proponents of the cosmopolitan to enact their emancipatory projects locally. There seems to be a difference in response between African American and visible minority Canadian teacher perspectives with regard to racism.

Although research participants in the Madson and Mabokela (2005) project were mostly teaching as the only minority teacher or one of a very small minority of teachers of color in suburban school settings demographically similar to the participants of this study, attitudes of the American teachers appeared to be more sharply defined along racial lines. Another interviewee of the Madson and Mabokela (2005) research stated:

> There was never a time I felt the racial pressures that were exerted on me in this district would be of major intensity enough to make me turn and run…I was tougher than most people who tried to intimidate me (p. 19).

This history of deep racial mistrust that is evident in many American treatises about visible minority teachers was not a factor in the narratives of participants in this research study. They saw Canada as a space to make their mark, something they fully intended to do in spite of obstacles that they classified as temporary, even as they saw the road ahead as long and rocky. They also viewed white colleagues as potential friends although some school cultures were more welcoming or accessible to them than others. Without going into too much detail at this time, school environments that encouraged participants in this study had an openness that was evident in the way they greeted, interacted with and looked at visible minority teachers and students. There was a desire to know the teachers on their own terms and an effort to acknowledge their talents and expertise. Discouraging school climates tended to be closed to difference, rigid in their understandings about the world, treated visible minority teachers as tokens of their race or did not believe they were competent professionals, requiring continuous confirmation of their capacity and providing excessive supervision of their work.

Teachers in this study appeared to use a variety of approaches to influence the school cultures in which they found themselves, some of which were rational (as in Genesse's preparation for confrontation with a colleague by studying the code of ethics), others practical (Eric's use of the public transit system to expose middle class students to how other people live) and still others were skillful manipulations of cultural capital (Manzi proving to her cooperating teacher that the students who were unsuccessful academically simply needed her help and belief in their ability to succeed. Genesse's use of cultural songs to teach French grammar rules). Foundationally however, all were insistent upon their sense of personal mission to enlarge the citizenship concepts of both students and colleagues informed by desire to put an end to prejudice, inequity and oppression. Their moral fortitude seemed anchored in a drive for justice. As will be seen in the next chapter, this was also a distinctive characteristic of the culturally responsive teachers in Gloria Ladson-Billings' study (1994), which allowed participants to see themselves as agents for change and provided them with insights into opportunities to engage in that project.

5.A. Discovering interculturally responsive teaching

5.a.i. Apricots and pistachios: hurting, healing, bonding and learning to live together around the complexities of food

Multiculturalism, as previously mentioned, has been criticized for surface treatment of culture, often called the "dance, dress, diet" approach (Hay et al., 2003), which keeps minorities outside of dominant cultural concern or complicity. Within the context of this study, however, clothing and food were identified by participants as sites of tension between visible minorities and established Canadian cultural norms. Food in particular came to be seen as an important site for practicing intercultural relations.

In a collection of essays and studies about integration of visible minorities in the teaching profession in Canada, Mara Albari (2002) wrote about an incident she observed while working as a substitute teacher in a school outside of Ottawa. The incident demonstrates how humiliating food issues can be for an "outsider" if teachers are not sensitive to cultural difference. In Albari's retelling of the story, a homeroom teacher made a derogatory comment about a smell she noticed in her classroom during lunch hour. Following her nose, she identified the "offensive" smell as coming from one of her visible minority student's lunches where she exclaimed how disgusting the child's food smelled and looked. Her comments went so far as to include "Oh, so that is what people in (culture Y) eat. Revolting!" which opened the door for classmates to continue making sarcastic comments about the child's food. Worse still, the teacher continued to vent her disgust in the staff room, with no apparent evidence of awareness as to how her comments would affect the student's feelings.

The insensitive response of teachers to students' ethnic foods was also an element in teacher-to-teacher tensions between mainstream and visible minority teachers. In our research group, Anahid came to be known as the one who most frequently initiated food issue topics for discussion. Her recounting of one of those tensions came at the first research meeting and was further elaborated upon at the second and third meetings respectively.

> That same morning which was the first day of school for the children, I was preparing my things in the kitchen in the staff room. And the principal came in and saw me and didn't say, that's interesting…why do you have this…and ah, ….she said "What's that!" aggressively. And I said that this was how we welcome people in my culture and I was really excited. And proud! I had never done this before! She became very angry because she saw these nuts. "You might have allergies! In your class!" Before I even had a chance to say anything. She even told me "You can kill a child! Kill a child on the first day of school!" and I was so – I got goosebumps I mean the thought of killing a child – telling a teacher that she might kill a child! On her first day at that school!

The context of Anahid's narrative is that she had decided to begin her year at a new school in a way that was culturally comfortable for her and that might encourage the students in her class to speak openly about their own cultures. Armenians have particular associations with apricots and pistachios, so Anahid chose to share these food items with her new students on the first day and to subsequently invite them to bring foods from their homes to share with classmates. Anahid's anticipation of sharing her culture as an integral part of her teaching practice was crushed by the reaction of her principal, and even though it took place several years ago, still remains a bitter memory for Anahid.

> But it IS a big deal because apricots are the food of our people and if you actually look at the Latin name for apricot it means "fruit of the Armenians", basically. And, um, so, lots of apricot trees. You always have dried fruit when you come. And even if you don't have anything and the people are poor, they will welcome you, they will feed you, they will go hungry, but they will feed you first.

To Anahid, apricots symbolized many things that she associated with her Armenian roots: drying fruit for when food became scarce, other cultures identifying Armenians through apricots, the importance of hospitality and of always finding food for the hungry, of sharing what one has to eat with others even if you yourself must go hungry. Similarly, pistachios, had cultural significance for Armenians. In Anahid's mind, something that was symbolic for her could be a means of opening her students' thinking to connecting food and cultural pride.

In this particular context however, I knew the principal and was able to provide some insight that allowed Anahid to put some distance between her hurt feelings and the principal's reaction to her "food and culture" project.

> Marie: I may be able to explain some of that. Because the principal of that school, her son was in my kindergarten class, many years ago.
>
> Anahid: That's interesting.
>
> Marie: And her son is severely allergic to peanuts.
>
> Anahid: See I didn't know that.
>
> Marie: So what she could have said was "my son is severely allergic to peanuts so I'm really hypersentitive about nuts". She could have said that.

In retrospect, what is troubling to me about this conversation is that Anahid's principal did not explain her reaction to nuts or try to find a way Anahid could for example, still use the apricots without the pistachios (which, technically, are not nuts). Both Ladson-Billings (1994) and Madsen and Mabokela's (2005) studies of visible minority teachers and administrators, documented similar incidents where visible minority teachers felt they were under increased surveillance and subjected to criticism of their practice in comparison to white teachers at their schools. This topic is further elaborated in chapter six.

In Manzi's opinion, flexibility with regard to food indicated openness to others. She spoke twice about how she had trouble understanding why Canadians she knows are so insistent upon scheduling and regimenting meals and why there appear to be exclusionary attitudes regarding eating with non-family members in this country.

> For me it is not hard to change patterns because of where I come from. But we have time for dinner and if there are three people and we have a visitor, we just all take less food. Anything can happen, it is not only food. We just adjust. But our children here have a different pattern. Mornings, some people even know what they are going to eat for breakfast some days before, it is written on the fridge. And this rigidity is something new to me... I said to my friend, "You even asked me when I am going to leave your home so that you can eat!" She never did that again. But I didn't even want to eat there. That is a big insult. How are going to travel in this world if you can't be open to change?

Genesse had previously used food in the example of reconciliation for her Cameroonian community. The ritual began with visiting the graves of ancestors, offering prayers and blessings, bringing red palm oil and finally feeding the entire community as a sign of repentance and expression of desire to be accepted back as an insider. Food seemed to be the sealing of the social contract, a way for people to include others and an expression of forgiveness for wrongs they may have committed.

Another food connection that came up for all participants was lunch in the staff room, which had negative connotations associated with reaction of colleagues to visible minority teachers' food. Comments ranged from interesting and exotic to strange and this was a deterrent for taking lunch in the staff room. Anahid explained it this way:

> But I've avoided the staff room on a number of occasions because I was tired of explaining my food! (laughter) Like, YES this is again pita bread and NO the dip is not the same (I just want to eat my lunch!!!) I get tired of being so exotic!

During the fifth research meeting, I asked participants to show dramatic tableaux of times they felt excluded. Interestingly, they chose tableaux that took place in imaginary staff rooms and had to do with both exclusion and inclusion around food, as well as negative comments about students that participants felt helpless in refuting. The inclusion scenarios involved a generosity towards others with food, sharing for example, a bag of cherries or crab apples with all the staff. With regard to the negative talk issue, the dramatic tableaux showed working together, and problem solving about a particular student's learning or behavior concerns rather than speaking harshly about them to colleagues. The concern with negative talk about students in the staff room came up at three of the seven research meetings. I found it interesting that the topics of exclusion based on food and negative talk about students were related to each other in several of the conversations.

From another point of view, Manzi found that after living in Canada, she experienced frustration with how much time her own people spent talking, cooking and eating when she went home for a visit.

> Social life is a good thing at my home. Let's talk, let's cook and eat. But after that you find yourself thinking that there is a lot of wasted time…Sometimes I get frustrated.

Food times when visiting in Rwanda had become problematic for Manzi but she also spoke of tensions around food with regard to teaching examples used in Canada. She explained how the choice of food examples teachers used to explain a concept may be confusing to children who are newcomers to Canada.

> I was thinking, let's say I want to teach fractions. Something that will come right away to a Canadian teacher will be pizza. Because we serve it in pieces. I have seen it in so many books. Suppose that the class you are teaching has a kid that is new to Canada. A week, a month, whatever. Pizza is new to them. We haven't been ordering pizza in my home. In university I didn't have time to cook and I would struggle, "What can we eat that would be so fast?" A friend said to me "Pizza!" I was so happy to discover it! But I didn't know pizza. Most of the time students hear examples they don't know. But the others seem to know – like McDonalds – they look "Mmm" so they know it is a food. But the examples. Think about who you are teaching.

Anahid had a practical response to Manzi's "unknown food" dilemma:

> Anahid: Something I did in music, you may have done this Marie- it made an impact. I always had my Swiss army knife on my key chain. Well that kind of took over the lesson sometimes...(laughter) but they were VERY interested! They liked the knife. And I had an apple. I was teaching the value of notes – whole notes, half notes. In French, the words ... go with the value. There is a way of using the word that reflects the rhythm. "Double-crochet, noir, noir, noir, noir" and "noir" is the steady beat.
>
> Eric: I see.
>
> Anahid: And you have two eighth notes that are one beat and kids get confused with that. So to illustrate that, I had an apple and they were familiar with it –
>
> Marie: and it was real.
>
> Anahid: Exactly. Cutting it up "I will share this with my friend, how many apples do I have?" And they would say "one!" When they see two they think they have two beats. But I could just put the apple pieces back together: "Do I really have four apples?"

Anahid's teaching examples were always a source of interest and reflection for the other participants. She had an ability to translate complex concepts into simple, practical exercises and day-to-day object referents. In another anecdote, Anahid recounted how a CD of global music she played regularly in her class came to be known as the "Coolaid" CD. Genesse spoke of asking students to bring food items from home for math class, such as macaroni, raisins, and beans. Asking students to bring their own foods avoided misunderstandings about food examples Genesse might use in class, and reduced the possibility that anybody's food would be labeled "strange".

> Eric: Actually, a friend of mine introduced me to using M &M's for fractions. But is that culture?
>
> Marie: Well it is culture in the sense that it is from this culture, it's food.
>
> Eric: And they like it so if they do their fractions, they get to eat them after. It is a good way to do fractions. With candy.

Eric's comment "and they like it" was an indication of how he approached teaching generally. His basic premise appeared to be that if something was attractive, agreeable or interesting to youth, then that was the place to start the new learning. He began poetry from song lyrics the students knew, drama from stories they could relate to from their experience and math with candy. This connection of finding out what students know and like before teaching new things, can be made to the other participants' anecdotes about their use of story, dance, song, cultural visuals and games to teach topics that might have been either tedious or threatening to students.

Each participant spoke regularly about the importance of finding out who one's students "really" were. The desire to know one's students may have been stronger for these teachers because they did not come to teaching with a sense of privilege and knowledge. Frequently they felt they were in positions of inferiority to the other teachers who had inside knowledge of "how schools work". Because they themselves knew what it felt like to be labeled, excluded or without insider knowledge, they exhibited a strong tendency to avoid doing the same to their students. They also realized from personal experience that a child may have a wealth of knowledge and experience with no opportunity to have it validated if school experience did not allow that child's "knowing" to become known to the group. Food and inclusion were important enough to come up throughout the research meetings from the first to the last when we spent a couple of hours eating a pot-luck lunch together.

As was seen in the opening example of a child's experience of the insensitivity of a teacher with regard to food brought from home, food exclusion experiences can easily be associated with deep wounds and barriers between people. Food is important to life from even before we are born up until we die. There is no area of living that is not in some way touched by food. The shared yet contextually complex rituals of tasting, showing enjoyment, sharing foods, offering hospitality and learning to cook cultural dishes appears to be key to enjoyable intercultural exchange and a sense of inclusion, whether one is a child in the classroom, a visible minority teacher or a friend across difference.

> Anahid: Well I think that [cultural clash] can be avoided if you have the SELF KNOWLEDGE, the knowledge of your own culture. And you have a faith that in your culture, people for

> centuries, or more - have been welcoming people with…pistachios.
>
> Marie: And most of them didn't die (laughter).
>
> Anahid: You have to be confident that your idea even though it might be different than the grade one "organizer teacher" next door, that you have that confidence, that as long as you believe it will work with your kids, then it will. Then you listen to them and you give THEM the opportunity to say how they will welcome people in their culture.

Lustig and Koester (2003) in their book about intercultural communication write about intercultural relationships as being dynamic, meaning they are continually subjected to outside forces of change while those in the relationship attempt to maintain balance. Their analogy is that of trying to dance with a partner on the shifting floor of a ship at sea. People in an intercultural relationship may have "very different expectations about the preferred nature of their social interactions" (p. 290), which act as the external forces impacting the relationship dynamics. Social interactions are a "given" in all cultures, but the expectations of social interactions will vary depending on the nature of the relationship; for example between children and parents, two people who are romantically involved, employers and employees. Gender expectations and comfort with hierarchy play a role as well. Dugan Romero (2001) in his book about intercultural marriage lists food and drink as a topic of intercultural tension more contentious than sex, gender relations, finances or any other complex issue couples may have as they attempt to forge a relationship across cultural difference. Food, evidently, has a host of value-laden expectations and norms.

Lustig and Koester (2003) interpret social relationships along the three dimensions of *control* (status or prominence), *affiliation* (degrees of friendliness, social warmth) and *activation* (interpersonal responsiveness). All three of these dimensions can be connected to the disclosures of research participants with regard to tensions around food, colleague's attitudes towards students, and degrees of inclusion through collegial relations. Visible minority teaches were subjected to judgmental or controlling behaviors by colleagues who saw their food or their relationships with students as threatening to the school status quo. Conversely, sharing, for example, a bag of cherries or apples with the staff was seen as a "food equalizer" among staff members that leveled control issues.

Research participants saw Canadian teachers and frequently white Canadians in general as cold and unfriendly because of rigidity around food rituals and lack of hospitality to strangers involving food sharing. All four participants portrayed their cultures as hospitable to the point of going without food to make newcomers, guests or strangers feel welcome by offering whatever they had. Colleagues outside of their cultures were judged as more or less friendly by the degree of interpersonal responsiveness they showed through food sharing, tasting and eating behaviors. Ongoing curiosity about food was considered intrusive. Willingness to see students positively and openness to new experiences was associated with willingness to show flexibility and openness towards food generally. John Berry (In Bennett & Bennett (Eds.), 2004), writes:

> Increasingly, evidence shows that people everywhere share some common, underlying psychological features (processes, functions, styles, traits, etc.) and that there is variability in their development and expression that can be readily associated with ecological, cultural, and social features of the population. This is a very important claim for intercultural work for two reasons. First, without such common, basic, shared human qualities, no intercultural *relationships* would exist. Second, without such variability, there would be no need for intercultural relations, because there would be no *inter*cultural phenomena (p. 174).

Certainly human beings share food as a common experience, however the intercultural ramifications of food assumptions and expectations are not as simple to live with as Berry might imply in the above statement. Barna (1994) explains:

> One answer to the question of why misunderstanding and/or rejection occurs is that many people naively assume there are sufficient similarities among peoples of the world to make communication easy. They expect that simply being human and having common requirements of food, shelter, security, and so on makes everyone alike. Unfortunately, they overlook the fact that the forms of adaptation to these common biological and social needs and the values, beliefs, and attitudes surrounding them are vastly different from culture to culture (p. 175).

For this aspect of the study, common ground was food. Inclusion by peers was defined by their food attitudes and behaviors. Participants agreed that openness to others and their food was a necessary criteria for successful intercultural communication. An assumption was that inclusion of others in food sharing and meal times was so important that should it require sacrifice to the point of going hungry oneself in order for others to feel welcome, so be it. Hospitality was unanimously agreed upon as a virtue, lack of hospitality, a vice. This was clearly marked as a place of tension between "cultural" communities and "Canadian" norms, which can be attributed in part to the differences between collectivist and individualist cultural expectations as explained by Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield and Trumbell (1999):

> Collectivism is a cluster of interrelated values that emphasize the interdependence of family members. Within this value system, children are taught to be helpful to others and to contribute to the success of any group they belong to—beginning with the family. Even knowledge of the physical world is placed within a social context.
>
> In contrast, schools foster individualism, viewing the child as an individual who should be developing independence and valuing individual achievement (Greenfield, 1994). Unlike collectivism, which emphasizes the social context of learning and knowledge, individualism emphasizes information disengaged from its social context (Hofstede, 1980). When collectivistic students encounter individualistic schools, conflicts that are based on hidden values and assumptions can occur (p.2).

Rothstein-Fisch et al. (1999, p.3) contrast some features of individualism and collectivism in schools as follows:

Table 3

Individualism	**Collectivism**
Child as individual	Child as part of the family
Independence	Helpfulness and interdependence
Individual achievement	Group success
Scientific information disengaged from social context	Scientific information embedded in social context

Within the teacher cultural identity context of this study, food and inclusion appear to be places of cultural difference between collectivist and individualist societies (Bennett, 1998; Hofstede, 1997). Peterson (2001) and Evans and Mavondo (2000), provide a resume of Hofstede's theoretical model of cultural dimensions, from which the concept of individualism and collectivism can be traced within cultural studies. Hofstede used data from 117,000 IBM employees across 50 countries and 3 multi-country regions to determine variations in cultural attitudes towards: 1) *power distance*, referring to comfort with and preference of hierarchy differential in power relationships, 2) *collectivist and individualist* preferences to human interactions that stress loose or close ties with others, 3) *feminine and masculine* societal gender roles that are either clearly distinct or overlapping, 4) *uncertainty avoidance* meaning how comfortable one may be with the unknown and, 5) *Confucian dynamism* which refers to long-term or short-term orientations towards the future and the degree with which traditions are honored and respected, social status obligations honored and virtue stressed and valued.

Although Hofstede found variance within the five dimensions in all cultures, he found that a majority of any given culture had distinct cultural norms within the four dimensions. He plotted these differences as country preferences within five dimensions to determine national portraits of cultural norms. Although his work has been criticized (Sondergaard, 1994; Shackleton and Ali, 1990; Triandis, 1982), it is still generally considered the most comprehensive work in providing a national framework for cultural values (Evans and Mavondo, 2000).

Evans and Mavondo (2000) examined aspects of individualism and collectivism as cultural generalization placements on a continuum with regard to: importance of loyalty to close groups (i.e., family and friends), importance of interpersonal relationships (this category was deleted from their final analysis), recognition of the right to privacy, freedom of the press, respect for individual freedom and importance of consensus in society (p. 6). Their research attempted to use the Hofstede dimensions of cultural difference without benchmark reference to American norms but rather to the cultural norms of participants. This is important because it looks at the secondary consideration of participant's *perceptions* of difference between cultures, which may ultimately be more useful for educators in learning to be culturally responsive to students and colleagues perceived of as other.

Sue McGregor (2003), on the other hand would attribute what participants perceived as the lack of hospitality in Canada, to fallout from consumerism. She writes at some length about how excessive wealth contributes to insulation against the suffering of others and how unbridled consumerism promotes marginalization of the vulnerable in society. Schick and St. Denis (2005) relate consumerism and colonization in the following manner:

> "The other" is positioned as an exotic spectacle that the dominant culture may appreciate and consume. As students like to say: "I am fascinated by all the cultures. I love learning about them," a preoccupation in which students unselfconsciously participate as consumers whose only troubling moment is in the plethora of choice. The onus remains perpetually on [Aboriginal] teachers and students to explain themselves, to exhibit the markers by which they can be known as the other (p. 309).

Whether attributed to placement on a continuum of individualist to collectivist cultural traits or whether placed in a value perspective implicating patterns of consumerism to interpersonal and intergroup responsiveness, the reality of participants in this study was that sharing of food and an attitude of hospitality surrounding food contributed to their sense of belonging. Absence of these factors correspondingly contributed to their sense of exclusion from the school environments in which they taught.

5.a.ii. Manzi's milk story and the significance of oral culture

Critical to this discussion of the role of food in understanding culture, was Manzi's recounting of her mother's process of revealing her will before she died. To bring the full impact of this experience to the reader, I will cite Manzi's story in full.

Manzi: I have so many things representing who I am, and talking about peace – I just thought about 1998 when my mother was so sick and she called me and said she wanted to talk to me. I just started a new job and I have to go over there. I ask her what she want to tell me, but she was so sick, I didn't even know if she would die even that very day.

But she said we cannot drink milk that day. She told my sister. Milk in Rwanda is everything. If you read a book, milk for Tutsis is everything. So I haven't been there so I say, well we drink juice instead. In the evening she had all the milk for the whole day with two "things". One to hold the milk and a small one – I will bring them next time – to drink the milk. She only have two. We are 5 girls and one boy.

Then what she did she pour milk in the small cup and spoke, this is to bless you and your children and your family, your home. Whatever you want to do you will be blessed. You have been so obedient to me accepting to come and finding the money to pay for the ticket this long way to come – even you are busy. Your children will do the same thing and you will have peace. To me I never had seen such a thing, it was so new. Many of us started to cry. So she blessed the milk and wished us a long life to have milk to give to our children. So I took the milk and I was supposed to do the same thing to the others and pass it around. She should have started with the oldest but she started in the order she wanted to start with. And then for me, I had to give to others.

So what does this mean? It means this is the way we express a will. You see how here you have a will with a lawyer. There you don't write because they don't know how to write. But they have, there in the family - everyone is there, there is a witness. No one can say that she didn't say what she said, no one can lie. They respect that if you lie there will be a curse. We respect symbols as much as we respect words in Western culture. That milk was giving me the authority...

Genesse: To speak for her name.

Manzi: Yes...That day she had energy to express herself. Her face changed and she looked very peaceful. I couldn't see that before. And that also tells me that even though we come from a culture that is more oral...

I don't know if you have noticed that when somebody is speaking you can read the face. When you look at the face, the expression, it has a meaning, tells a lot more than what you read in a book. That is part of the oral tradition that I really like. As a teacher I think that I will continue to use that and especially with the parents of my students. Because a letter without a connection – I need to be able sometimes to link, sit down and look at them and understand who they are. I am missing a big chunk of information to know who my students are otherwise.

The importance of oral tradition through collectively understood symbolism, in this case through pouring milk, and the significance of the family order during that event became more evident as the conversation unfolded. Manzi explained how her mother was able to establish family peace by giving the milk first to Manzi instead of choosing the oldest of her living children. Peace, of course, has special significance to Rwandans because of the genocide. Manzi's involvement with the AIDS/HIV infected widows outside of her local village was a source of contention between Manzi and her siblings. Although Manzi's mother had previously made it clear to them individually that she approved of Manzi's project to help the widows, her siblings did not accept this decision until it became collectively shared during the milk pouring ceremony. At this point, Manzi's mother made it known to all her children, that they were to support and respect Manzi's work with the Rwandan widows. All family members were together and all saw and heard their mother's will. To continue to engage in conflict on this issue would have been tantamount to disobeying their mother's dying wish. Manzi stated:

> I know that God exists and He is our Creator, but it is good to have a mother. My mother assured me that what I am doing is right and I hear that voice, "Go ahead and do this work".

From a teacher perspective, it is helpful to note Manzi's explanation of how she used oral tradition skills to know the whole student. Her insights provide a necessary clue to schools who complain that their immigrant and Aboriginal parent populations do not respond to letters from the school: "a letter without a connection – I need to be able sometimes to link, sit down and look at them and understand who they are. I am missing a big chunk of information to know who my students are otherwise". Letters outside of a personal context where no one can collectively agree, look at each other, hear each other, pick up non-verbal cues about who they all are…are frequently meaningless to parents from collective, oral traditions. Bennett (1998) refers to this as the difference between high context (oral) and low context (written) cultures. In high context cultures, the letter is considered important only in that it is a part of the person, just as clothes and sharing of food bring interpersonal connections and common understandings. Constructing common understanding has to be done in context, in person, in a group, if we are to respect the oral traditions of many cultures represented in Canadian schools today. For a newcomer to Canada, a letter out of this context could be perceived of as insulting, impersonal or incomprehensible. Respect for others in high context culture is to be demonstrated personally. It can weave food, clothing, ritual, age, intent and willingness to help others into the same human tapestry:

> Genesse: I am from the quality of respect that we pay to all persons. If older persons come in, I would give them my seat. It is important for us to welcome and respect older persons, even just one year older, to show respect. Also when the women have a baby, you go to visit them. Not just a visit, but to stay and help. 2-3 weeks you devote to that person. When my sister had a child, I went to Montreal to make sure she is O.K. She do the same for me.

Ladson-Billings (1994) refers to this as the "Black helping tradition". One of the white teachers in her study commented:

> I notice a great deal of caring that Black youngsters give to siblings. I mean, when I share something they always save part of it to take home to share…they make sure that that first portion goes to that brother or sister or baby cousin. I think that's kind of nice. It is what caring and cooperation are all about, putting someone else's wants and needs before your own (p. 71).

A Black teacher in the study was heard to give the following explanation to her students when she assigned them "homework families" to get their homework completed during class time:

> And that's what we are going to do here. When your "family member" does a good job you're going to show him or her just how proud you are. And when someone doesn't do a good job, you're not going to laugh at him or tease him. You're going to do your best to help him do better. When one of us does well, we all do well. When one of us fails, we all fail (p. 62).

Both these descriptions support the kinds of statements that Manzi and Genesse were making about their families and cultural norms, and significance of this understanding to their teaching.

Another interesting example from a Canadian study about 20 teachers of Punjabi Sikh ancestry in British Columbia (Hirji & Beynon, 2001), shows how cultural knowledge of Punjabi ancestry teachers served as a bridge with Punjabi students and parents. Both male and female Punjabi teachers worked specifically to help Punjabi parents understand the school system and to transmit the school's needs and expectations to parents. Female teachers in particular went out of their way to help Punjabi students but, like teachers in the present study, found they were also in frequent demand for academic assistance by non Punjabi minority or marginalized students generally who felt more comfortable going to them for help than to the mainstream teachers. With regard to the role model theme for Punjabi students, one math teacher stated:

> I try to be a role model for all the kids but the Punjabi kids I think especially look up to me in that there are so few Punjabi teachers…They'll see me around the community doing things…and it just lets them be more comfortable about who they are (p. 11).

The Hirji & Beynon study pointed to the differentiated roles of male and female teachers in the Punjabi community; although both genders felt that their experience of racism and their understanding of cultural communities were central to their teaching, the female teachers believed that they had the additional responsibility to move the Punjabi community towards equality between women and men. Their strategies were to actively inform parents about ways their children could do well in school, consciously affirm female students of Punjabi descent, stop harassment and violence towards female Punjabi students by male Punjabi students, actively advise female students in both their career aspirations and through encouragement to overcome gender barriers. Hirji and Beynon (2001) write:

> The women actively informed parents about ways they could help their children succeed and encouraged them to support

> their children. In this way they are similar to the many "Black women [who] use their classrooms and status as educators for African-American community development" (Collins, 1990, p. 150 cited in Hirji and Benyon, 2001, p. 15).

A different point of view is provided by a study by James Loewen (2001). In writing about the Mississippi Chinese, Loewen decribed how the Black community had been turned against itself through the effects of mistrust generated by colonization and slavery. In his study, the Chinese community engaged in mutual support similar to what Ladson-Billings (1994) refers to as the "Black helping tradition" with an attitude of service towards Blacks and whites alike, and as such were able to establish themselves economically through social capital in an economically disadvantaged community setting. Since Mississippi Blacks were not used to being "served" and enjoyed this new experience, and since whites "expected to be served" and were not disappointed in this by the Chinese, the Mississippi Chinese were able to establish themselves in ways that the Black community most likely would have done, had they not suffered the intergenerational effects of Blacks being turned against each other with ensuing mistrust.

What arises from these contrasting examples is that all cultures do not respond uniformly to oppression and individuals do not always respond as predicted within cultural expectations. Welcoming visitors may be different than welcoming those who have come to live in a new place. Behaviors of cultures removed from their original geographic location may welcome their "own" similarly to those who receive "strangers" in their countries of origin. Generations of external efforts to divide and conquer have produced damaging effects for many, yet within any given cultural group, there will be individuals and families who show both resilience and change over and above cultural norms. Individuals are able, as Genesse was in her recounting of community justice in Cameroon for example, to acknowledge both the cultural superstitions and the colonized religious teachings as existing side by side with varied influences even within her immediate family. In attempting to explain these variations, Bennett and Bennett (2005) write:

> A given individual may exhibit the predominant group tendency a lot, a little, or not at all. So cultural generalizations must be applied to individuals as tentative hypothesies, open to verification (p. 151).

Added to the Bennett and Bennett explanation can be the intersections of history of conflict within and across cultures, cultural attitudes to in-groups and out-groups, social class and the effects of war and trauma on normal cultural and intercultural relations. What is important to this context however is that from their dialogue, teachers in this study appeared to be mindful of *both* the power of the collective to heal and to destroy *and* conscious of the discrepancies in cultural behaviors. Their advantage over teachers who only know individualistic culture is that they were able to weave back and forth between norms, and to understand the variety of influences in individual behaviors, as the need arose.

Bennett and Bennett refer to this skill as the capacity to move between "shifting frames of reference". They state that it is a competency that all people with bi- or multi-cultural identities from a variety of professions develop irrespective of race, culture, social class, gender or nationality. From all the group dialogue data, teacher participants in this study showed not only the capacity to shift frames of reference but also to be able to see multiple frames of reference in a variety of contexts.

It is of course, quite possible that not all visible minority teachers have the capacity to shift their frames of reference. It is equally possible that white teachers without the benefit of a plurality of experiences can have enough empathy and sensitivity to context to have developed shifting cultural referents. In this study, however, all four participants were able to shift their cultural reference frames and illustrated the use of this skill in explanations about their teaching. With the exception of Eric's comment about a colleague who had married a Cree woman and was open to discussion about racial and cultural issues, participants did not speak of white colleagues' capacity to shift cultural referents; rather they were regularly frustrated by their perception that white colleagues did not appear to be able to even imagine the existence of other cultural referents.

This is consistent with findings in studies I have quoted in this dissertation with regard to white teachers. At the time of writing, with the exception of the Ladson-Billings study where three of the eight "culturally competent" teachers studied were white, I was unable to find studies that focused directly on interculturally competent teaching of white teachers, although there was ample evidence of white teachers' resistance to incorporate cultural response into their teaching. Surely this would make an interesting future research project.

In this discussion of food, inclusivity and community, it seems to me that a teacher without knowledge of the effects of colonization or of collective cultural decision making norms surrounded by food symbolism for example, would not be equipped to deal with a diverse classroom's social needs. The effects of this lack of understanding on students and their families was blatantly apparent in the opening example of this chapter. Parents from collectivist, high context, interactive cultures would have difficulty finding a space to negotiate their concerns without the presence of teachers and other school personnel who understand their world views or who know how to ask questions to find out.

As Haberman and Post (1995) point out, recent educational research supports the idea that many white teachers not only do not know how to relate to students who are not from the same racial, cultural or social class background as they are, they actively resist acknowledging and learning about difference, let alone validating it. The authors write:

> It seems naïve for proponents of particular multicultural programs to proceed on the assumption that classroom teachers simply need new knowledge and skills to implement their programs; that the teachers simply have a void in this area that needs to be filled in. Our experience with experienced teachers is that they have a range of strongly held views on multicultural issues. Many believe, for example, that school curricula should only recognize individuals and the total society and cease to exist. Others believe it is counterproductive to the general welfare to recognize, let alone seek to enhance,

> diverse culture groups. Some teachers seriously question the right or wisdom of groups to retain a second language. Many teachers reject the concept that it is necessary to fight group prejudice and societal discrimination. They believe that each child should learn to deal with and accept every other child, and if *individuals* are taught to respect *individuals* then the problems of prejudice and discrimination would fade away (p. 343).

They explain further:

> In-service teachers tend to be fixed on denying the existence or usefulness of subgroups in ...society...They either denied the need for teaching about or being sensitive to cultural subgroups or perceived tolerance as the most appropriate goal for teachers and schools (p. 346).

Contrastingly from the Hirji and Beynon (2001) study, there appeared to be a natural affinity between Punjabi teachers and South Asian families:

> Both male and female teachers felt they were viewed positively by the Punjabi Sikh parents. They were viewed as being *appna* or "one of us". Eleven of the women also related how members of the Punjabi Sikh community would approach them for advice and they felt obligated to assist them (p. 9).

One participant stated:

> I think that makes a difference...because you are a minority...you have that extra ability [in comparison to someone] who happens to be white, who doesn't speak the language (p. 10).

What then, were the authors' most obvious conclusions for an immediate solution? "If teachers' cultural narrowness is the problem, then it would seem reasonable to propose engaging in staff development *or getting new teachers* [my emphasis] rather than assume that some unexplained transformation will occur when the teachers are given new ways to teach...(p. 345)" and again, "It may be more reasonable, as well as easier, to select teachers with a multicultural ideology in the first place – before any level of training is offered (p. 352)". Each time this suggestion is made however, Haberman and Post are quick to add that this solution would be neither "feasible" nor "adequate".

Haberman and Post (1995) are not the only educational researchers to suggest that hiring teachers with an attitude of openness to others is an "obvious" and "reasonable" solution, and that this solution could be best achieved by attracting and retaining more visible minority and Aboriginal teachers. Many Canadian educational researchers such as Ghosh and Abdi (2004) have come to the same conclusion, as has Canadian administrator Christopher Spence (2002), researchers Lundy and Lawrence (1995), Archibald, Pidgeon, Janvier, Commodore and McCormick (2002), Ernest Khalema (2003), Mansfield and Kehoe (1994) and Carr and Klassen (1997), among others. Carr and Klassen outline very clearly the divergence of perceptions between most white teachers and teachers of racial minority with regard to equitable treatment of students and the importance of hiring from the ranks of the minorities. They write:

> Racial minority teachers can be role models for all students, and can break down barriers both institutionally and individually (Carr, 1995; Carr & Klassen, in press). It is therefore troubling not only that a number of White teachers have a limited perspective on the contribution of racial minority teachers, but also that many White teachers think racial minority teachers' positive influence on students does not transcend racial lines (Sleeter, 1992)(p. 78).

Haberman and Post (1995) conclude: "Further, inservice teachers need to see that all children and youth need three types of learning: learning related to themselves, their subgroups, and the larger society (p. 346)". Teachers in this study were mentally prepared for, and showed success in achieving this goal of assisting all students to learn about themselves, their subgroups and the larger society. In this respect Manzi's earlier statement bears repeating: "I think these children are very lucky to have those of us who are not from here as teachers. They will understand the world better because of us". Many concerned with the issues of equity in education would agree.

5.B. Singing grammar lessons and Math stones: becoming aware of culture in teaching and learning

In the middle of the research period, I stumbled upon an issue of the educational journal *Teaching Children Mathematics: Focus issue, Mathematics and Culture* (2001). I was so enthralled with the concepts

I found in the journal, that I copied the entire journal for the research participants. This journal captivated our research group more than any other articles I had given them on the topic of culture and teaching. Since none of the participants were math specialists, they all had limited teaching experience with math. Becoming aware of culture in a subject less known to all of us, seemed particularly significant to the group learning process.

> Genesse: …I never before this session, stop and think how the way I learn when I was young in elementary school. I never think it have anything to do with my culture. Or that my culture help me to understand basic math. [From my] reading and thinking, I can see that the way I teach, my culture affects it. In French, when I teach French, is like a song. I learn with songs, my verbs were with songs. In French you have a little word called a *conjonction*. We learned it with a song and clapping hands. It was like to play a game. And I never made the connection until now. (she claps a rhythm)
>
> Marie: So you are starting to see culture in ways you didn't before.
>
> Genesse: Some of the parents were surprised. I did it with out realizing it, not aware, but the parents thought it was fun, at the end of the month they know all the verbs with singing. They were surprised I was bringing good things from my culture.

Manzi was equally surprised that the games she played in her childhood had mathematical concepts imbedded in them. She explained a stone throwing game (similar to "jacks" from my childhood) while Genesse went outside to find some stones to demonstrate how to play the game:

> Manzi: The way you learn multiplication. Used to be very difficult for me. I was stuck on… how to connect addition and subtraction with multiplication. Multiplication is addition so many times. There was a – sometimes I think about it – how can I introduce this game to my class. They used to play with stones. We did. Let's say you have 20 stones in a circle. When you play you throw a stone up in the air and take another before the stone falls, one, one, one. Then the next step is to take two. Throw one, take two. I had 20, so if you take two, you only have to do it 10 times.
>
> Marie: There you go. Multiplication and division at the same time.
>
> Manzi: Yes, then I go to the third one. I was learning one times one is one, one times two is two, with three, I realize you cannot divide 20 by three. You will have some stones left. Then four. You see at recess I play the game and come back to class and I understand the whole concept.
>
> Marie: Why not use that with your class?
>
> Manzi: Because they don't know how to catch! You have to know how catch things!

This exclamation from Manzi brought a heated response from the other research participants. They assured Manzi that hand-eye coordination and learning to catch were physical education goals and could be justified in math class too since the game was teaching math concepts. Genesse explained that she changed her teaching expectations after realizing that Canadian children did not have the practical or motor skills she assumed they would have from home or from playing together in groups. Eric and Anahid mused over how using cultural games strengthened areas where children might otherwise remain weak throughout their entire schooling. When all four participants attempted to play the stone game, it was obvious Manzi and Genesse had a great deal of skill in comparison to the rest of us. To be in a position of expert with regard to this game was exhilarating for both Manzi and Genesse. It demonstrated to me how important it is to create a space where people can share the knowledge and expertise they have from their own cultures, backgrounds and experience and how this validates and builds confidence. I asked Manzi and Genesse if they experienced math learning in Canada differently. Manzi replied that although the end result was the same, the strategy to get to that result was different.

> Manzi: The way you count. When I was learning to count, for example, I never counted 1,2,3,4,5 - you would put them in groups and see the group and say "5" and then another group "3". My mother when she is counting potatoes, she will be counting them by grabbing groups "4" then "5", then she would tell me how many potatoes she had. After that I say – "no wonder I have trouble to teach here".

> Marie: Teach it your way. It's better. You are teaching whole concepts rather than individual things. It makes sense to me.
>
> Manzi: I can. But I replaced a teacher in grade five and you have to follow the one you are replacing. And we were counting. Animals. So how many? So kids put animals and feet on the animals. And they had this strategy already. I didn't understand it. It didn't come to me when I watched it.

This excerpt reminded me of a previous conversation when Manzi insisted that there was a gap between what she had to do here and what she already knew, and that everything she had to learn was in that "gap". What Manzi already knew how to do was to use math strategies from her experience growing up in Burundi and Kenya and how to work together with others to achieve a common learning goal. What she saw the children doing in that grade five class was something she could not relate to and this confusion as to how to link what she knew with what she needed to know was a frequent place of frustration for Manzi. She mentioned several times that she had never been asked to show or explain what she knew, that colleagues assumed that if she didn't understand their methodology, she had none of her own. In fact, Manzi not only had her own strategy, she became a defender of the learning process for herself and her students by acknowledging her lack of Canadian cultural or subject specific understanding and working through the process *with* her students:

> Manzi: One time during the practicum I was teaching statistics. I don't really get it. If you want to kill me tell me to teach

> statistics. Because I never learned these things in school. At NAIT the course I took, and then teacher education. So this was hard for the kids even to understand it. I was trying to teach this when I was doing my student teaching. I could see the eyes of the teacher watching me that she was mad because I didn't understand and the students I was working with didn't either. I told the kids, I think you didn't get this, and even me, to tell you the truth, it is very hard for me to understand statistics. But tomorrow, we are going to find a way together to learn this. We are going to use smarties. So I brought smarties, they put them on the paper and they would tell me there were less blue, then less red, then less yellow. So from the smarties, they would draw a line and from there I would introduce graphs to them, instead of doing the calculations first before they even know what this means. So the cooperating teacher was like "Oh, well, this works". So the only thing I could do was to be frank [with the students] and then redo it. She said, "Ya but you know sometimes you have to know what you are teaching". I would say, "Yes, I will try to be better prepared…"(in a sarcastic tone of voice – everyone laughs) as if she was perfect herself!

This led to a discussion about the importance of using student knowledge and problem solving skill whether or not one is in a position of security with regard to the subject matter one has been assigned to teach.

> Manzi: Also, when students do some things that don't work, they have to do it again and that is how they learn.

Anahid: And that time you came up with the idea [referring to Manzi and the graph], but the students can help you too. One of them might have said, can we use smarties, "jetons", etc? And then as the teacher I say, yes of course that would be much easier... (I could have done that too!)

Marie: Sometimes you wonder as a teacher how you miss these things.

Anahid: Well it's all part of realizing that you aren't God as a teacher.

Marie: That's a very important thing to know.

Eric: That's for sure.

Anahid: You don't have to know everything and think of all the creative ways to do things. The kids have huge input, creativity.

Eric: Some kids expect teachers to know everything and when the teachers don't, they realize that they have knowledge that the teacher may not have. They can also be the teachers. Even when you play dumb as a teacher and ask the student to explain to the class, you learn that they have even a better way of explaining it and the students understand better from them.

Anahid: Students need to be teaching too.

Eric: That's right.

> Marie: And sometimes to say – you know what, this is not working! What can we do?
>
> Manzi: They often know you just have to give them the opportunity and that you are there for them but they can also come and help.

There is a complex interplay between what one knows and what one has to do to cross over with that knowledge to unfamiliar territory. As a teacher learning unfamiliar concepts, one has to go through one's own process, then find ways for students to connect their knowing to the new learning. Immigrant teachers have to leap across the divide between what they know and what they are required to bridge for their students in ways I had not imagined possible. It seems to me that in this respect, the first generation Canadian teachers were more aware of the kinds of obstacles they would have to straddle and the resources they could find both for themselves and for their students in order to bridge cultural ways of knowing.

Their comfort with not always understanding what was going on served as a useful tool in helping to alleviate anxiety over uncertainty, tap student creativity and problem solve collectively. What was common between both the immigrant and first generation visible minority teachers in this group was a sense of timidity and doubt as to whether or not their own inner knowledge was either available or useful for them to teach children from a variety of backgrounds. Until going through the group discussions, arts and journal article prompts and the research meeting process, all four participants felt to some degree, that their positions as teachers were precarious and their knowledge from other contexts of dubious value.

Manzi summed up this feeling for everyone when she said:

> Before I used to do it because I am who I am, but I wouldn't want another teacher to see me doing it that way. Because I am using culture. Today I can call my kids and take some rocks like I showed you and show them how to count by two with these rocks. Before I couldn't even think it was something I can use. Today I'm not afraid, shy or ashamed of my game. I will show it to other teachers and say this is what I use. And I'm sure that they will like it too!
>
> Marie: That's the other thing – you are SURE they will like it!
>
> Manzi: Yes they will really like it!
>
> Marie: We were thrilled when you showed us this game.
>
> Manzi: That is it! You all liked it ! So now I know they will like it too!!!

5.C. Intercultural courtesy: greeting, observing, practicing patience, being responsive

I mentioned previously that whether participants felt welcome or unwelcome in schools seemed to be largely dependent upon non-verbal behaviors of others. Given that oral cultures are highly sensitive to the looks, gestures, behavioral implications and emotions of others (Bennett, 1998; Hofstede, 1997), it makes sense that these "chunks of information" as Manzi explained, were indicators that the door to communication was either open or closed.

Greetings make people feel connected to each other. A conversation about greetings with another Rwandan friend outside of the research group prompted me to check my information with Manzi at our next research meeting:

> Marie: (A Rwandan friend of mine) told me that in Rwanda, people are talking in a circle and if you want to join them, you have to stand on the outside and ask, "May I join you?" and they have to say, "yes". Or the group may say, "You can join us when have finished..." but usually they say, "Yes". If you don't ask to join them, it's very rude. But it's also very rude for the group to say no. Does this make sense to you Manzi – do I understand it correctly?
>
> Manzi: Yes. And especially that is how you know somebody does not like to be with others. Because they don't ask to join. They are taught to ask at home. So it is bad if you don't want to join others. If teachers see you or parents they will say to the child, you have been there for a long time but you never asked to join. What's your problem?

All four research participants spoke of the importance of teaching greetings to their students, of cultural greeting norms and of how disconnected they felt without greetings in Canadian society generally.

Anahid: …I've been saying "Bonjour, bonjour" and they [my students] just walk by me! I repeat it three times with eye contact until they get it and realize I expect an answer. But did I ever notice that.

Manzi: But I think people, well I used to think that it is not a good thing here to greet people.

Marie: See? You think it's the norm!

Manzi: I thought it was a wrong thing, but then I thought at home greeting is a good thing and I like it so we are going to keep it. But I wasn't thinking that I should extend this to Canadians. Because at work nobody greets you. I used to tell them, "Why can't you say hello to me?" And then they say "OH HI", like that.

Marie: I'm sorry but I think that is wrong.

Manzi: It's REALLY wrong. A greeting is a connection. I'm alive, I'm here. In some cultures, you don't even say "Hello" you say in their language, "Did you see me? I'm here! Are you too?" In my language it is this greeting: "Are you alive? Are you alive in the morning? Marmotzeh".

Eric: It's the same thing in Malawi, it's like "Are you O.K., are you well?" It's not just "Hi". And there are some variations to that too.

> Manzi: In the morning you say to your neighbors, “How is your morning going?” And they say, “Fine and you?” And if there is a problem, you know it because they say, “We have bad news here”. In a greeting you can know about that person.

Apart from non-verbal clues, greetings in the four cultures represented were critical to the intent to understand, to know, to acknowledge others. Greetings set a tone, lack of greeting or forced greeting as was the case in Manzi’s example of a colleague communicated a troubling message: “You do not matter enough for me to acknowledge your presence: to greet you is to see you as a peer, a fellow human, a colleague… and that I cannot do”. It is not difficult to imagine the effect of continuously being relegated to the invisible on one’s sense of self as a worthy and competent person. If oral cultural skill involves sensitivity to gesture, facial expression and behavior, it seems reasonable to surmise that newcomers would frequently feel insulted and marginalized, in particular when they take the time to observe a new situation prior to taking action.

> Manzi: And I have seen, every time I go to a new job, they don’t give you time to tell them what you already know. They say “You don’t know, you don’t know this”. People are different. Some are so quiet because they are observing and want to know what is around them. And the fact you are observing, some people don’t see you are even taking time to learn the names of the people you are working with. They think, “ Oh, she’s lost. She doesn’t know”.

The significance of having good observational skills in a teaching context is increased capacity to see students' emotional states as they learn and to adjust teaching practice accordingly. Genesse, Eric and Manzi made frequent references to the importance of observing prior to taking action. Oral cultures depend greatly on observational skill to learn. A direct connection between careful observation and capacity to reflect on teaching practice came from Genesse. She explained how her observation of her students *and their family and community contexts* enabled her to adjust her expectations and her teaching strategies to better meet student needs:

> Genesse: Everything is observing. Take the children from where they are now. When I teach French I notice that they make a lot, a LOT of mistakes! And my first year I was shocked. How grade three can do this kind of mistake. It was inexcusable, but later, I listen to them and what kind of language they use at home. With that I changed the way I was teaching French, completely. Now I know that many parents do not speak French or just the mom who is never at home, so the mistakes they make "Je suis fini" like in English. I was cringing! I couldn't stand it! I like them to speak good French. But I tell myself, "Genesse you are wrong". I changed. I am conscious where the mistakes are coming from and how to prevent it. And we see what is wrong and sit with them and explain how it really is.

When Genesse told her colleagues how she was able to remedy her students' French mistakes, they were skeptical and replied that those mistakes were a fact of life living in an Anglo-dominant society.

Genesse, however, was successful in getting the French language results she sought by careful observation and adjustment, patient explanation and the use of song, rhythm and game to reinforce the correct usage. She made three references to the surprise expressed by her students' parents at her "cultural" teaching techniques and how well they worked.

Eric told the group at the very beginning of the project that he thought of himself as a keen observer who was able to learn from watching what was going on around him. In his letter to "a person who inspired me to become a teacher", he revealed his inner processing based on observation of a coach he is still in contact with:

> Eric: All the times I watched you coach and teach I became inspired by you. I started to realize that all the people that didn't like you didn't know the real you. You hadn't taught them. All the students you taught or coached appreciated what you did for them. When I thought of becoming a teacher, I wanted to become a person who makes a difference to their students and I thought of you.

For Eric, a person who made a difference could only be determined by long-term observation of his/her behavior over time. The coach in question did not appear initially to be congruent in his behavior towards students, but this did not stop Eric from patiently continuing to observe him until he felt he was able to make an accurate judge of the coach's character. Anahid's reference to the observations of the Aboriginal community about the colors of her clothing is another indication of the significance of observation for trust in oral communities. When Manzi attempted to explain the behavior of a teacher from a Mennonite colony who was able to solve a second language dilemma that had perplexed her colleagues for years, she began by first identifying the teacher's skill in observation. Her analysis unfolded by showing how this teacher continued to listen, observe and work to understand. According to Manzi's explanation, not until the teacher felt she had adequate knowledge through observation and reflection, was she able to arrive at the problem solving stage.

> Manzi: This teacher was observing and she had time to compare the two. She found a similarity. Whereas the other people jumped on the conclusion because they didn't take time to really see what was going on. She was believing that these [students] have a knowledge that I don't know but I have to find it. They are not just dumb. It is me who doesn't know what they know. She take time to listen to observe and to understand them. Then once she has been listening and finding the problem, that is the time to say "Ah this is what is happening and she can compare both [kinds of] knowledge". There is a process going on in her mind that other people didn't do.

Manzi, Genesse and Anahid shared with the group at the first research meeting that the reason they accepted to participate in the research was because they had observed my attitude and behavior over time and knew they could trust me. Relationship building is not something that takes place over night. Although this is certainly not a new concept to me, I learned through the current research process just how important relationships were to immigrant teachers and how they used the skills of careful and patient observation, greetings with intent to welcome and show respect, and attention to the nuances of learning. These skills were used to nurture their relationships with students and to modify their teaching practice accordingly.

5.D. *Discussion*

In this chapter I explored the second set of themes that emerged chronologically from the data following participant life story portraits. A common thread between this chapter and the previous one is that of belonging. Chapter three explored belonging in a number of contexts, including landscapes of memory, individual perceptions, family, cultural, linguistic, professional and national feelings of belonging. Culturally symbolic meanings around clothing and artifacts and their significance for understanding participant's worldview were tied into concepts of belonging.

At the beginning of this chapter, the tendency of multicultural ideology in Canadian education to follow the themes of "dance, dress and diet" was mentioned. It is interesting to me to see that participants in this study followed similar themes. My interpretation of participant's enthusiastic embracing of the very topics multiculturalism has been accused of using to marginalize and tokenize them, is that people initially come to know each other through their differences in clothing, outward behaviors and food rituals. Observation of response to these initial forays determines whether or not it is safe to continue the relationship on a deeper interpersonal level. We all eat and dress, yet norms surrounding food and clothing vary greatly. What may begin as exoticism and curiosity across difference, can lead to deepened understandings of differing cultural norms and real friendships, providing of course that the desire to know others on their own terms is present on both sides. I did not ask participants to speak about clothing, food or artifacts, but I did ask them to bring something visual and auditory that had cultural significance to them. They were keen to show these artifacts, discuss food issues and share their cultural knowledge with each other. The acceptance of the group and the genuine desire of everyone participating to listen to and learn from each other encouraged participants to speak more and more freely.

Perhaps the initial "dance, dress, diet" preoccupation is a necessary step in the balance of learning to make personal connections between people across difference. The danger would be that these initial cultural "tags" could become stereotypes to be used against those who do not show "sufficient" movement towards assimilation into the mainstream. These same "tags" could also be used to justify continued marginalization of those perceived of as other. This danger and its ramifications will be explored in greater depth along with participant experiences of racism in chapter 6.

One aspect of the learning from this group of data themes is that issues of food need to be carefully and sensitively considered in both classroom and staff room contexts if we are to learn to live together with less hurt and isolation. That people need a forum to share significant moments of their life experience if they are to teach and learn together became clear to me from Manzi's milk story. Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson and Zine (2000) write:

> Styles (1988) developed a metaphor for curriculum as being both a “window” and a “mirror”. Curriculum as a “window” allows students to see the realities of others, while curriculum as a “mirror” allows for the representation of their own realities (cited in Thomas, 1997, p. 55). This provides an interesting conceptualization of curriculum as a medium for knowing oneself and others. However, the same caution needs to be applied in terms of the nature of this representation being truly connected to students self conceptions and not stereotypes (p. 194).

Food associations can be used as a window into culture or a mirror in which one can see oneself. From Manzi’s story, the unfolding of family structures in Rwanda, group decision making, the enactment of significant family covenants such as the last will and testament of a parent, the practical demonstration of respect and societal expectations of deference with regard to social hierarchies, and the importance of observation and patience in community relationships all became manifest. Anahid’s explanation of the apricot as “fruit of the Armenians” and its symbolism of hospitable behavior gives insights into how to more effectively relate to collective cultures. Emphasis on hospitatity troubles the what’s-in-it-for-me mentality accepted as “normal” in North America. How many similar stories could we learn from if there were such a forum to speak and to be heard within the school day? How many more children and teachers could shed their sense of isolation if granted this kind of encouragement and support to safely reveal ever-deeper layers of their own lived experience?

Manzi's retelling of her mother's will and testament through the cultural symbolism of milk for the Tutsis in Rwanda, allowed the research participants to see an aspect of Manzi's thought and experience. She provided us with a window through which to see life, family, teaching and learning in an entirely new way. At the same time, her story provided for Manzi and her children, a mirror in which they could see themselves and say, "This is who we are and we are proud to be who we are".

This brings us to the second theme of cultural teaching practice and its significance for Alberta schools. Study participants illustrated their teaching practice through a variety of examples ranging from carefully choosing which food to bring forward as examples for teaching fractions, to explaining what respect looks like in collective traditions, to playing games for learning grammar. Their teaching methods had in common a desire to know who students really were, to connect previous understandings to new concepts and to have students enjoy themselves while developing a sense of belonging. Dei et al. (2000) state:

> Nurturing feelings of belonging…among visible minority students involves pedagogical and curricular strategies that reinforce the notion of Canadian identity as a common, yet plural space, shared by all citizens irrespective of their origins. This must be supported by changes to current educational practice that privilege particular knowledges and histories while silencing others" (p. 174).

They explain that for a true representation for equity in educational experience in Canadian classrooms, three themes need to be addressed. They are:

1. visual representation
2. knowledge representation
3. staff diversity (p. 175).

Visual representation refers to the active and conscious work of a school to show a plurality of visual signs or indicators where students can see themselves. Examples given begin with multicultural pictures and student self portraits and move to showing farm animals found in several countries, kindergarten dress-up clothes that represent a variety of cultures and food preparation that uses cooking and eating instruments from around the world. *Knowledge representation* is the deliberate attempt of teachers to show a plurality of perspectives, to question the Euro-centric canon in literature and history and to allow narratives of peoples to be told from their own standpoint rather than as appropriated by others. It allows for oral traditions, stories, music, visual art and drama from various cultures to be part of the accepted pedagogical toolkit. *Staff diversity* shows students that people in authority come in all colors, religions, sizes, abilities and both male and female. Active recruiting of diverse staff builds trust between schools and cultural communities. These three themes were present in the practice of the visible minority teachers of this study. Their understandings of the complexities of cultural experience, of the capacity of the in-group to nurture or to destroy, of the effects of colonialization, trauma, war and racism on themselves and others, gave them an advantage over mainstream teachers in reaching those students who might otherwise be relegated to the margins. Coming from a pluralistic background themselves, they were more likely to have tools at their disposition to portray the world in its complexity than someone without that experience.

> How we understand "education" and how we determine the validity of a knowledge system is entirely specific to our cultural, political and historical contexts…Indigenous systems employ oral skills, storytelling, drama and song as means to transmit culture and knowledge. Utilized in schools, these pedagogical skills can be incorporated as part of a more holistic methodology for learning (Dei et al., 2000, p. 182).

Another theme that emerged throughout the data was that of respect. Respect was associated with a number of cultural assumptions including respect according to age, attention to the requirements of respect with regard to social status, and dedication to the communal responsibility of character education of the young. It involved learning to greet and acknowledge others and practicing patience in interpersonal relations both to determine the trustworthiness of a person over time and to empower students to overcome learning difficulties. Participants in the study believed that the society in which they found themselves here did not encourage respect and courtesy and there were tensions surrounding whether or not they should be overt in their teaching of these qualities to children outside of their cultures. Over time, participants became more and more convinced of both the "rightness" of their cultural assumptions regarding training children to be courteous and respectful and of their cultural approaches to teaching. At the last research meeting, Manzi summed up her experience with the following words:

> Have you seen when someone says a friendly hello and it just makes your day? So we discuss this in my class and I get them to practice this with me. Now they even hug me…Even though I am very far from here, I feel so close to you all. I think teaching is the right thing for me to do. Even in my class I decorated some places with stuff from Rwanda. I'm sure that if I haven't been in a group like this, I would never do it. Now I am sure that it is good.

A final learning from this data collection group is that of the significance of oral culture skill in observing, making others feel comfortable and responding to learners with gradual scaffolding of skill that pays attention to individual difference, but insists on a communal responsibility to the group. Observation takes place not only with the student, but with the family and social context to gain "chunks of information" that would otherwise render the teacher's interventions less ineffective. These are similar characteristics that Dei et al. (2000) identified as the strengths of community-based school initiatives in Ontario. The initiatives they surveyed were created by cultural groups to encourage academic success for the children of those communities and took place generally on Saturdays or after school hours. Strengths of these initiatives are listed as follows:

1. Attention to the individual learner;
2. Integration of language, culture and spirituality;
3. Inclusive governance and empowerment opportunities;
4. Representative teachers;

5. Inclusive curriculum;
6. A sense of discipline (p. 204).

Participants in this study paid close attention to the needs of individual learners, integrated language, culture and spiritual/moral values into their teaching, and involved parents and community members in the education project through culturally learned skills of observation, response and patience. Through their presence they provided new racial models for students. Participants used a variety of culturally based pedagogical strategies that promoted social inclusion, and strove to instill in their students a sense of discipline that did not excuse them from the work of learning or their responsibilities to the classroom community, while insisting on their capacity to succeed. Although the context of the above list from Dei et al. (2000) is that of community Saturday schools spearheaded by cultural communities, this study shows similar influence within mainstream schools, of visible minority teachers with regard to student social inclusion and academic assistance with marginalized students.

6.A. Uncomfortable realities of four visible minority teachers: teaching experiences

> Manzi: Other teachers can make you understand you don't belong there without even telling you any words. If I tell you that I heard any words that were not good, I would be lying. They never said anything, but what I saw in their face, and the questions they asked. "Did you go to school in Africa? You couldn't go to a university here if you went to school in Africa." So what did I do wrong to show this person that I must have never been in school? It is an assumption that is wrong. Things like that. Today when I think about it, they were not even such wonderful teachers that they had a right to criticize me.

All four research participants shared experiences of exclusion and mistrust based on their race and ethnicity in the schools in which they taught. Genesse's poignant description of how white students and staff walked a wide berth around her as if they were afraid of contamination, was greeted with knowing nods by the other research participants. Manzi spoke with incredulity about several experiences where the office staff handed out copies of available teaching positions in the district to everyone in the room except Manzi. The action was justified by telling Manzi "it is not likely you would be hired anyway" or by showing surprise that she should even consider applying. Anahid preferred to eat her lunch alone in the classroom rather than to be the subject of stress-inducing questions and comments by her colleagues that could not overcome their perception of her as "exotic". Like Manzi, Anahid felt that information readily available to white teachers frequently passed her by - one of the key reasons why she developed her own multicultural resources website.

It is important to note that these non-verbal cues were mentioned over and over by participants as will be demonstrated throughout this chapter. Omission and deliberate exclusion were seen to be a strong a factor in the discomfort voiced by study participants. American participants in the Madsen and Mabokela (2005) study mentioned similar non-verbal cues that demonstrated to them over time that they were not welcome or implied that they were in some way inferior:

> When I first came here, I really got the feeling that there were people who were expecting me to fail…People weren't so generous in helping me when I got here. There were instances where people could have been supportive and spared me some anguish, but they failed to when they knew that they could have (p. 14).

Another participant related:

> When I first got here, I felt that the teachers felt that I was not up to par. I did pick up on that in their comments. I think one [European American] teacher called me "culturally deprived." He offered me an opportunity to come over to his house and go to church or something (p.15).

Anahid reflected in retrospect that the underlying racial attitudes of her colleagues probably affected her unwillingness to publicize her multicultural resource website at her school.

> This conversation has really got me thinking. My online project YYYY – diversity resource network and base for teachers that I put together. I wonder why I haven't told the whole school about this web site. Why haven't I promoted it? Well because I don't feel safe yet. I keep thinking "What if..." people would think I was pushing my agenda or asking me if I want their jobs or if I'm making some financial illicit gain from the website. I don't feel, well, perhaps next year, or maybe this year I can push it with the staff. The kids are open. But not the staff. It would have to be one on one or in a very small group of people. Even if the principal is open. I feel reticent.

Eric's response was:

> I think just in terms of vocalizing it [exposing prejudice and racism], I can see it being O.K. if a white teacher did it because that's not their "agenda". White teachers might make kids feel more comfortable about diversity if they spoke out. It might be seen as less threatening. I was thinking about a white social studies teacher who was open about diversity and married a Cree woman and was very open in his classroom about how important it is to value diversity. One teacher at XXXX school would ask me, "Hey have you seen a Black teacher in any school here?" He was very open. And I said "No, I hadn't". And he said that wasn't good that we need more Black teachers because we have Black students. It was good. He was open so we could talk about things that way.

Both Anahid and Eric's comments show how they determined whether or not it was "safe" to speak about race issues with colleagues. If they *sensed* an openness based on colleague's previous comments and body language they were more likely to speak about issues of racial difference, they felt encouraged to speak from their position as a racial minority. Eric's colleague from the previous excerpt was particularly candid about how important he felt it was to have Black teachers on staff. Note that Eric's comment was very short and neutral, yet he felt both relieved that he could speak openly about race with a colleague and free to be able to speak about these issues if he wished to do so. Neither Anahid nor Eric brought up the "race" issue with colleagues, nor did they pursue the discussion with vigor when a more open-minded colleague broached the subject. It is possible that previous experience had taught them that it is not "politically correct" to speak about race in Canada. Schick and Denis (2005) write:

> The celebration of heritage and heroism not only maintains difference but also allows a multicultural Canada to congratulate itself on achieving tolerance. Describing inequality as an effect of racism is seen as bad manners in the midst of well intended tolerance (p. 307).

In contrast, Genesse, who understood the Canadian taboo surrounding discussions of race, used her immigrant status to feign cultural ignorance and confront colleagues with their assumptions and misunderstandings. Although more subdued in personal style, Manzi also used her colleagues' misunderstandings in her favor by feigning lack of knowledge or understanding of cultural norms or school protocol to continue her work without harassment. A frequent comment of hers in response to unwarranted correction and criticism was, "Oh, I didn't know..." with a helpless shrugging of her shoulders. As she explained this strategy to us in the research group she would laugh to show that this was her way of "beating them at their own game". If her colleagues were incapable of seeing her as competent, then she would use their attitude to provide the necessary screen to gain the freedom to teach as she saw fit. Her feigned ignorance helped her to preserve her sanity in a tension-filled workplace and to avoid excessive supervision by "playing dumb". I will add that this was a response of frustration to colleagues' *continued* insistence that Genesse and Manzi *did not* know. In the face of continued colleague disbelief in their capacity to perform, Genesse and Manzi used the "play dumb" comeback as a survival strategy.

It is clear that participants in this study were well aware that race was a forbidden topic of discussion in Canadian society and in schools. Their reticence in speaking about their race experience, even to those who appeared open, was informed by previous realizations that white privilege infiltrates and controls even the most well-intentioned overtures at openness. As explained by Schick and Denis (2005), the omnipresent undertones of white privilege make it dangerous for racial minorities to speak without consequence. I have often been irritated by comments of white colleagues who said that "they" showed friendliness and openness to visible minority groups but did not continue because the individuals they targeted either did not welcome their overtures or did not respond with immediate friendliness. Several colleagues described their criteria for persevering with friendly overtures in the following terms: friendly overtures would continue on their part if they sensed "gratitude" for their time and effort from the visible minority individual with whom they were associating. This insistence on gratitude has been explained by Schick and Denis (2005) in relation to the history between colonizers in Canada and Aboriginal peoples. They write that an undercurrent of superiority towards visible minorities in Canada has its foundation in distain for the first people of color it marginalized when first settling in Canada.

Race and culture are intertwined and overlapping. Eric commented earlier that being a visible minority teacher shaped his practice and his experience, allowing him to see the world as much larger and with more layers of complexity than most of his colleagues. One of Eric's recurring themes was how to initiate teachers without a sense of culture, into the world of cultural knowledge. His desire to open his colleague's eyes to the wonders of culture, however, was mixed with frustration.

> My opinion is every teacher brings their own experience...You grow up in a multicultural society and you have to deal with that. If the teacher also has their own experience growing up – say I have Chinese or African friends – that would help. But I don't know how you would learn that in university, other than to say this is culture, you have culture, do it. But really, you can read it but without applying it you have to have your own personal experience. They will have to *experience* it eventually.

This comment prompted Genesse to recount a recurring experience in schools where she taught; that of being considered the local "Black expert" in the context of staff room conversations. She attributed the root of this attitude to the lack of multicultural experience of her colleagues.

> But many of the colleagues I meet they don't have that experience. They only know their own way, their own culture. For example, one teacher say "Oh the little boy – the parents

> come from Africa. And Genesse, I don't know how to deal with THOSE!" And I am polite. I say "Who do you call THOSE!" really LOUD and everyone stop and look at me. I say "Yes, who are you calling THOSE?" She say, "O.K. I didn't want to say it like that but I don't know how to deal with that, I write a note back to the parent and they don't sign the agenda." I say "SO?" They think I know everything about every African!

A similar experience is related by a teacher in the Madsen and Mabokela (2005) study:

> ...the chief [the principal], he goes, "Well, just put all the Black ones in her room. Black folks like other Black folks." So this is the type of logic that I have to deal with. He's a Black problem child; put him in her room. Black teachers are supposed to be disciplinarians. "Put him in there, she can deal with it." It's just a lot of ignorance...After a while I said to the principal, "Spread this out. If we are gonna give them a nice experience here, then they shouldn't all be with me, should they?" A change was made right away, but only because I requested it (p. 44).

Assuming that Black teachers know everything about all Black cultures or can solve the problems of all Black students can be compared to assuming that all Chinese students are hard working and good at math and science. Although both are examples of positive stereotypes, they have the effect of frustrating the individual who is not recognized for his or her unique experience and cultural knowledge.

What appeared to be frustrating for all the research participants in this study was that although they would have initially given no weight to these kinds of stereotypical comments, colleagues *persisted* with their misinformed assumptions with out seeing the need to know their visible minority colleagues for who they really were. Bauman (2001) writes:

> Let me add that while the right to difference is granted to others, it is as a rule those who grant such a right who usurp for themselves the right to stay indifferent... When mutual tolerance is coupled with indifference, communal cultures may live alongside each other, but they seldom talk to each other... In a world of 'multiculturalism', cultures may coexist but it is hard for them to benefit from a shared life (p. 135).

He elaborates that the dominant society cannot progress towards authentic relationships and real community in a pluralistic context, if attitudes of indifference and superiority prevail. Viewing those who are racially different as outside of one's necessary human interaction keeps visible minority teachers and their expertise away from either personal or professional influence that might change the way schools marginalize underserved students.

White teachers can choose their collegial relations, voice opinions if they desire to do so or be comfortable in silence if they chose not to contribute to communal decision making, whereas visible minority teachers are in a constant position of trying to be heard, to have their experience validated and their opinions considered. When they do not contribute, they are told to "speak up" which effectively places them in a position of playing the role of token representative of their race, or to "follow the appropriate protocol" which results in a no-win situation alone against an impermeable hegemony. Speaking up results in accusations of "having an agenda". Following due process or protocol to redress a grievance, brings the complainant back to where he or she started, but with a host of new scrutinizers and criteria for the reinstatement of reputation as one who does not challenge the system.

The racialized teacher is thus in a continuous double bind: refused cultural recognition on his/her own terms yet assumed to have expert knowledge of his/her race as token of that racial community in the school. Both reduce the reality of a human being to that of a stereotype. Lionel Laroche (2003) writes that in dialogical intercultural relations, cultural stereotypes are used *reactively* rather than *proactively.* This means that one cannot assume that an individual from any given group is going to have particular cultural knowledge or respond with particular behaviors because that would result in stereotyping. When confronted with information that shows a cultural tendency however, a culturally responsive individual would react with knowledge of cultural tendency. An example of this is that when immigrants come to Canada, they learn that Canadian small talk is frequently focused on the weather. To initiate a conversation, however, the newcomer may begin with any topic. If the Canadian response is to change the topic to that of the weather, it would be appropriate to respond in kind. However to assume that all Canadians only respond to conversations that are weather-based would be a stereotype, effectively limiting both depth and breadth of future conversations with Canadians.

Schick and Denis (2005) write:

> Whiteness operates so that white teachers and students benefit simultaneously from two seemingly contradictory processes. First, dominant cultural practices are always 'on', always the standard or privilege to those whose histories, ethnic backgrounds, social class, family assumptions, and personal knowledge are in line with these dominant practices. Second, the fact that these practices are not the norm for everyone and that one's achievements may be at the expense of others is often an invisible reality for privileged groups (p. 300).

Applied to schools, we know that the articulation of power and privilege tends to favor children from the mainstream through reinforcement of social capital that keeps the norms of the status quo as standards against which other races and cultural groups must always prove themselves. Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson and Zine (2000) write:

> Schools routinely engage privileged students with "cultural capital". That is to say that these students enjoy the psycho-social and material benefits that facilitate school success. Their parents understand the workings of the system, having succeeded in the same or similar system. Teachers who are almost entirely from the dominant group, understand and validate their culture, as normal and invisible. They hold higher expectations of students who have or may have a relatively higher level of English fluency, greater access to "quality" lifestyles, health care, and a steady access to a socially reinforced sense of normalcy and belonging. In short, the

> requirements of success for these students, or their *success needs* are consistently being met, in nearly every aspect of home, school and community life (p. 147).

When Sajidah Khan (quoted in Dei et al., 2000), working as an education consultant to develop anti-racism programs in elementary schools in Ontario was trying to identify 'best practices' of inclusive education, she reported the following telling findings:

> Schools and administrators felt that having students of different colors and backgrounds sitting next to one another was enough, but when we would hold up pictures of different ethnic and racial groups and ask which ones are Canadian, 90 percent of the time they would choose the ones showing people with blonde hair and blue eyes (p. 174).

If we compare the above attitudes of school personnel with the interview findings that Dei et al. (2000) compiled based on students reports, the real 'best practice' findings emerge:

> When grade eight students at one school were asked who their favorite teacher was, they referred to their grade seven teacher. One Black student reported a significant increase in his marks from grade six to the end of grade seven. He attributed this to his grade seven teacher, a Grenadian-Canadian who has since retired from teaching. The student stated that his teacher pushed him to do well, and from a 72 percent in grade six, he jumped to an overall average of 84 percent at the end of grade seven and was on the honor roll. "He would tell me that I should do better…made sure I was organized, he was pretty strict".

> This teacher stressed excellence and had high expectations for all of his students. When he returned to the school for an assembly, the students flocked to him; he was very much admired by all of the students. It was evident, seeing so many students of African descent (of African and Caribbean origin) all around him, that he had a great impact on them. This response by students speaks clearly to the need for a greater representation of African and racial minority teachers (p. 186).

I use this quote to highlight the above teacher's tendency to "push" students to do well or in the case of the above student, moving from "well" to "excellent". The high expectations and strictness of the teacher contributed to his reputation of fairness to all students and his impact as role model for Black students. This is not to say that white teachers cannot have a positive effect on students or color; but that the scarcity of visible minority teachers renders them socially significant to visible minority students seeking to find someone "like" them in positions of authority.

By way of comparison, in a Harvard study (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006) about American teacher resistance to rigidly imposed curriculum, the two white beginner teachers with the most effective instructional techniques for high academic achievement of minority students, based their resistance to prescribed methodologies on sincere interest in their students and a strong sense of social justice. Both teachers were systematically "squeezed" out of the system and believed that they were viewed as a threat to the existing hegemonic institutional structure that rewarded mediocrity and kept social inequity intact. The five Black and three white teachers in the Ladson-Billings study (1994) had to consciously hide their student achievements from colleagues, isolate themselves from colleagues, develop a thick skin for criticism and either remain silent for school decision making meetings or accept the lonely role of staff "troublemaker", to survive the rejection and undermining attitudes of colleagues and administrators alike.

To me the above example points to two significant themes: firstly, the *general* problem of teacher isolation and continued undermining of professionalism via top-down decision making that does not take teacher experience and expertise into consideration and secondly, a more insidious systemic racism and dominant discourse that informs those educators of any race ascribing to an agenda to improve the life chances of underserved students, that this will not be tolerated. If, after all, all visible minority and all Aboriginal students became as a whole more academically and socially successful, the dynamics of power could change significantly for the status quo. Systemic racism works to ensure that this possibility does not become real. Those who stand to gain from keeping the power imbalance intact may not have significant interest in making changes in the interests of equity and social justice.

Like the white teachers in the Achinstein and Ogawa (2006) study, Genesse in her last student teaching practicum was subject to a similar undermining of her ability to teach. Her cooperating teacher, choosing to magnify any initial teacher mistakes and inciting students to criticize their student teacher when she was absent from the class, greatly decreased Genesse's chances of success to the point where she had to return home to Cameroon for a year to rebuild her broken spirit. In sum, the combination of a school culture that discourages innovation coupled with the damaging effects of insidious white privilege, blindness to racism and sense of superiority, collectively reduce the possibility of visible minority teachers to shine on their own terms. Being true to themselves and teaching from who they are as racial and cultural beings thus becomes a strategic moral and political act of counter-hegemonic resistance as can be seen in Eric's next except. The context is that during one of our research discussions, Eric was trying to decide if visible minority teachers were more or less likely to avoid controversy in teaching:

> I was thinking sometimes some teachers who are a minority might avoid controversy just because people think they have an agenda. I have a friend in the school I was teaching at. He was brown, from the islands. He spoke about his experience growing up and the problems he had here. He tried to enlighten the students about what it feels like to be in the minority but some people thought, "What are you doing, YYY, trying to tell everyone your sad life?" So like in a way, you try to enlighten kids but you can have it taken the wrong way. Maybe he was too passionate, you know. In a way he would wonder what was going on. He is an actor as well and a very brave person. We were doing report cards. There was a parent council meeting at the same time. This parent came up to YYY and said "Who are you?" like the way he was asking it was as if he was questioning why YYY was in the school. YYY said, "Well I'm a teacher here, who are you?" That kind of attitude was what the kids would sometimes have. This guy was giving YYY attitude. And YYY didn't want to put up with that, so he would talk to the principal about what he said to make sure there were no stories afterwards.

What is interesting to me in this description is Eric's last sentence explaining how his friend would explain immediately to the principal what racial incidents had occurred from his perspective "to make sure there were no stories afterwards". Participants' dismay at the harmful effects of staff gossip with regard to minority children has been previously discussed. Manzi, for example, was adamant that her son's difficulties in school were related to teacher in-group gossip and referred to a conversation where a teacher told her son to watch out because everyone "already knew" who he was. It is not clear if the "stories afterwards" to which Eric refers, had to do with staff gossip, community 'talk', the reporting of incidents by parents to school administration, or all of the above.

Visible minority teachers in the Madsen and Mabokela (2005) and the Ladson-Billings (1994) studies had similar strategies to make sure their reputations were not damaged. They spoke of multiple strategies such as having to ignore ignorant or hurtful comments of staff and administrators in schools,
strategically choosing when to confront prejudice and preparing "one step ahead" plans of how to deal with potential problems of racism should they occur in school. Their frustration at being silenced, devalued and constrained is echoed from the Canadian context by a cultural liaison Aboriginal teacher in a Manitoba schools study (Kanu, 2005):

> I have so much more I can teach here...but I am not given the opportunity. I once asked the principal if I was just a token hire and she said, "No, we need you." But I do not feel valued here (p. 61).

6.B. Tensions between prescribed curriculum, school norms and cultural insights

> Curriculum is the textbooks and storybooks, the pictures and the seating plan and the group work and the posters and the music, the announcements, the prayers and the readings, the languages spoken in the school, the food in the cafeteria, the visitors to the classrooms, the reception of parents in the office, the races (or race) of the office staff, the custodial staff, the teachers, the administration, the displays of student work, the school teams and the sports played, the clubs, the school logo or emblem, the field trips, the assignment and projects, the facial expressions and body language of everybody, the clothes everybody wears. It is the Whole Environment (Allingham, 1992, cited in Dei et al., 2000, p. 175).

Participants in the research spoke of a number of tensions involving what can be loosely described as insider cultural knowledge coupled with broad global understandings that caused them to be critical of certain curricular objectives. They had knowledge about themselves and their cultural communities, cultural and social understandings about their visible minority students and broad experience with living in different provinces, countries and continents. This knowledge put them in a position of greater understanding about larger issues and root causes of students' problems. Whereas their local understandings were frequently not in line with their colleagues, the breadth and depth of their experience had provided them with intercultural competencies that seemed as inaccessible to their colleagues as insider school culture knowledge was to them.

Eric and Anahid, having spent most of their lives in Canada, felt caught between various cultural understandings and sometimes were paralyzed by internal playing out of possible consequences. This dilemma was present in responses to both discipline issues that emerged and to choices of student resources as can be seen in the following transcript excerpts:

> Also – a situation that happened. Well, not bullying but something happening. Do I always step in and say "you guys shouldn't do that" or do I step back and think about it first and not react right away. That goes through my head all the time. I know the steps I can take but I have to step back first. I play out the possibilities in my head. Sometimes I intervene but after I act it out in my head.

And in a later conversation:

> I'm listening and trying to go through the thoughts in my head. I don't know how to explain that but from my parents' perspective, they always seem to know what they are about and what they should do. For me it's not that clear. Because I grew up here and I know there are options. I always get stuck in the middle. If I go with traditional it wasn't even a big deal after all that thinking. Like does it really matter. Which way I take, I mean.

Anahid's response:

> I'm still confused about this. As I learn and reflect I have more ideas and it becomes more solid in me. But it might take all my

> life. Whereas I did see Genesse and other people I've known as being more clear on who they are and what they want.

And in another context:

> Living between two worlds. Or three. Always feeling the pull – what should you do now. In relation to where you are and your cultural background and it shifts with who I am with. Sometimes you might make more a point of something depending on the context. In Montreal I used a lot of world music but I didn't make a big issue of diversity because it was just there. But here I have to justify everything. To teachers, administrators... Intercultural communication in the social studies curriculum is just making people freak out. I can understand that. The unknown is scary. I don't want to be controversial.

Taken together, the four excerpts show how confusing a multiplicity of perspectives can be not only with respect to identity but also with the day to day exigencies of teaching, especially in the context of the repercussions of white privilege as was previously discussed. Eric and Anahid tended to avoid both confrontation and controversy with colleagues. Yet from a teaching perspective they were provocative and creative *within a context of social inclusion* and easily incorporated new techniques into their classrooms without worrying about whether or not those techniques would be immediately successful. Eric spoke of taking a workshop on drama in the classroom and translating it immediately into his teaching practice, or of buying books or other resources that showed a critical perspective and using them without over analyzing their relatedness to the curricular objectives. He could see his students needed to learn those perspectives and he found ways to meet their learning needs. At one point Eric explained how he used a particular book at the beginning of the year to show students that he believed they were capable of academic success:

> Eric: This book I used with grades 6/7 for their first day of school. I don't know if you have seen this story. It's about a girl growing up who doesn't know how to read. The others make fun of her. Eventually she has this teacher who helps her become a reader. I don't know if I should tell you the ending…
>
> Marie: Tell us.
>
> Eric: She writes at the end that she, the author, was that girl, and this surprises the students that someone who couldn't read became a published author. It encourages them. I started the year this way.

He also explained how he would carefully observe the readiness of individual students to move to a next step and how he would lead them to that step before they could think they might not be capable. Eric's understanding of the importance of belonging to a group and to being recognized as unique within that group was informed by a desire to have students question their attitudes and assumptions so that they would develop a stronger sense of empathy and justice. He questioned students about the implications of their comments, considered the larger ramifications of their attitudes and planned his lessons around the understandings he felt they needed to develop to be world citizens without prejudice. In the following quote, Eric talks about his critical approach to the curriculum. There was no requirement to teach about Black history or to observe Black history month in the school he taught. This did not stop Eric from teaching about it however and he explains why:

> Sometimes with kids it is just that they are naïve. At the same school on Black History Month, I showed them Martin Luther King and Rosa Park and then some videos. So we tried to have a discussion. They didn't know what was going on...

In a more general social studies context Eric showed how he approached history from a multiplicity of standpoints so that students learned to see things through the eyes of others and to gain insight into their experiences and feelings:

> I did this [dramatic tableau] with the kids. It was a lot of fun to do with Canadian history. Jacques Cartier [French position]. Anyways the process of him claiming land. With one kid standing. Holding a flag. Another kid is the Chief [Native position]. Then we show the conflict. We read that chapter and they had to each present it and the others had to guess who was who and what they were doing for the event.

Underlying Eric's desire to instill a sense of social justice in his students was a sense of play and fun. A few life examples of this sense of play are: his first childhood memory of making wire cars with his friends in his backyard in Malawi, his capacity to join in any cultural celebration and enjoy himself, his close attention to what might please his students as they entered unfamiliar territory such as poetry or Canadian history, his easy incorporation of drama, music and game into all subject areas. Eric demonstrated an infectious enjoyment of teaching and learning, even as he concurrently demonstrated tactful and wise handling of sensitive topics and situations. His own inner confusion about culture seemed somehow to enhance his capacity to take risks as a teacher that served the ultimate goal of student success.

One of Anahid's strategies was to regularly bring visitors and special guests into her classroom to provide her students with "living" diversity. She decorated her classroom with visuals that celebrated diversity and used music and stories that gave cultural insights to her students and opened a forum for them to speak about their lives and experiences. Anahid used her music training and willingness to experiment to find ways to deal successfully with difficult teaching assignments such as the following:

> I wanted to mention an activity I had done with my class in my first year of teaching. I was teaching music. One of the classes that came by a few times a week was a group of "welcome class" kids from all over the world. The only thing they had in common was that nobody spoke French, or English even. From grades one to six all in the same class. 17 kids. I thought "What am I going to do with these kids?" I was in my first year. I didn't even know. They were the greatest group of kids. I had all these instruments. I took out a bunch of instruments and I got someone to play a steady beat. And they were completely into it. That was one way they could interact and work together as a group. You had the six year old grade one kid with the grade six kids and really felt they were contributing. We just sat and played for 40 minutes. I think it was the most amazing class I was ever a part of. It's not something I taught, I just set up the

> instruments and put them in groups, showed them basic beat. But it was relatively unstructured. It worked.

One aspect of Anahid's own life that influenced her approach to teaching came from her capacity to learn from other's experiences and to translate this into her teaching practice. At one point she talked about her father-in-law's professional trajectory and how he worked from working on ships to becoming a wildlife biologist.

> He [my father-in-law] was very poor and ran away from home at 15 and worked on merchant ships. He had quite the experience. And when he eventually came back to Montreal, he worked for an oil refinery and in the mean time he met Allan's mom and they started going camping. And he met this biologist and talked to him to find out what he needed to do to BECOME that. He went back to school for five years and got his Master's and became a wildlife biologist, researching polar bears. One of the few – the only biologist working with the Caribou. He did some important research. But this day he even feels like an impostor. He goes to social events and they are a different class than what he grew up with. He feels more at home with really casual people, the oil refinery crowd. Even when he presents at an international conference he still feels like an imposter.

The understanding of the disconnect between various social classes and her own desire to have her father-in-law be comfortable with her, reinforced Anahid's strong sense of Armenian hospitality which she brought into her classroom. Referring to her classroom as "home away from home", Anahid spoke of her ongoing goal of creating a classroom environment where any newcomer would feel welcome and able to contribute from his or her own background and skill level without fear of judgment. Her own cultural awareness and pride allowed her to respond to her students with sensitivity and skill as can be seen in her explanation of how she approached substitute teaching with older students:

> So in all the classes I would start with introductions – little things, I'd introduce myself just quickly, and my two passions. And I would ask each of them to tell me what their passions are in life. It was interesting but it took a while and you have material to cover, but we don't know each other. Why should they respect me when they don't know anything about me to respect?

Eric and Anahid felt they were frequently in dissonance with curricular objectives they perceived to be limited or wrong for their understandings of the world and their students' lives. Anahid described it as teaching the "you have to" curriculum but either making it a critical reading for students or surrounding it with "the real" curriculum of global citizenship. She qualified Alberta contexts within a framework of the contributions of many peoples or contrasted with other provincial or national realities. Her pluralistic approach was a conscious decision to expose her students to multiple viewpoints and foster critical thinking. Both Eric and Anahid felt that their teaching had to open their students to the world and prepare them to live in it no matter where they were.

As immigrant teachers Genesse and Manzi had additional tensions to deal with. Parents from a variety of immigrant communities communicated information to immigrant teachers that they would not have been comfortable explaining to white teachers or other visible minority teachers born in Canada. They poured out their hearts to these teachers whom they saw as cultural lifeboats for them in a strange land. This had the effect of putting Manzi and Genesse in some very sensitive situations with no support from the schools in which they taught to really address them:

> I found out that the father had AIDS and so did the girl. She was also dying of AIDS. So I went to tell the principal and said that this is a very big responsibility. What if there is an accident and there was blood and other people would touch it not knowing. And to know why this child was fainting in school all the time even. I thought it would be so dishonest not to tell them. When I told the principal, she was looking at me. You should see the way she was looking at me. She didn't even care. "I don't know. So what am I supposed to do about it?" She didn't do anything about it. I wondered why I even told her. This is HOW MUCH THEY DON'T KNOW. That shows they don't understand… And I was just thinking all the time. One day the father will die, the mother will die. What will happen to those kids? And the older child doesn't know anything at school. She knows zero. This is how, when you come from these communities and you are a teacher, can you imagine what you have in you? You know things you can't say. And if you say, nothing happens.

Manzi attributed this lack of support to lack of empathy and compassion in schools generally. She spoke frequently of how much loving her students motivated them to overcome their academic difficulties. At one point Manzi explained how her cultural insights increased her compassion and made her more responsive to the plights of her students:

> In university every teacher who gives you a course says you really have to love kids. But when I look around me, I don't see it. And if you don't care about these children, then what are you doing teaching? Because I know that the family of these children, they are not going to talk about these problems. But they talk to me. They tell me. The kids had lots of problems and the family was looking for other ways to help the kids.

A similar attitude appears in teacher comments from Ladson-Billing's (1994) study:

> One of Lewis's star students, a boy named Larry, had had a particularly troubling history. Although he was short and slightly built, he was the oldest child in the class. He had been left back several times and was thirteen in a class made up of eleven-year-olds. He had been traumatized by the drive-by shooting of a favorite aunt. Other teachers in the school referred to him as "an accident just waiting to happen." None wanted him in their classrooms. Lewis referred to Larry as "a piece of crystal."
>
>> He's strong and beautiful but fragile. I have to build a safe and secure place for him and let him know that we – the class and I – will be here for him. The school has been placing him in the kitchen junk drawer, I want him to up there in the china cabinet where everyone can see him.

> By the end of the school year, Larry had been elected president of the school's sixth grade. He was involved in peer-conflict mediation and was earing A's and B's in every subject. He was among the academic leaders of Lewis's class (p. 111).

All participants, but particularly Genesse and Manzi related that students from a variety of racial backgrounds who felt marginalized, were comfortable coming to them for support, both social and academic. Consequently they had more one-on-one interaction with students with difficulties, more parental input from immigrant parents and as a result, a much heavier emotional load to bear than their colleagues. Situations became moral dilemmas for which there frequently seemed to be no response other than personal involvement outside of school. In one instance, Manzi spent a considerable amount of time counseling and supporting a Somalian mother whose husband was abusive. In other situations, she was called as a mediator to deal with family or interfamily conflicts involving the education of children, women's rights, family violence and intergenerational issues. Both Genesse and Manzi in seeking to be of assistance to other immigrant families, took extra part-time work over the summer teaching children's camps, increasing their likelihood of being seen as problem solvers for immigrant communities. This was also a finding in the Hirji and Beynon (2001) study of Punjabi Sikh teachers as was previously mentioned.

> Manzi: I think for me it is just I feel weak. I have been involved in organizing so many things. Now I just want to be a simple member and belong not to always be in charge.
>
> Marie: To get a break.

> Manzi: Yes but I am so tempted sometimes to do it. There is so much need.

Insider knowledge of marginalized children and their families prompted strong protective feelings in Genesse and Manzi as can be seen in the following excepts:

> Genesse: And I say to my colleague, " Don't you ever talk about my student again. If you open your mouth to say something negative like that about my students, you think about it and you just don't even say it!!!" I don't want to deny that he have bad behavior or sometime act like that, but please, there is no reason – for once say a good thing.

> Manzi: After that I talk to the teacher and she say, "Oh that family they have problems". So what you are saying, the family is not doing anything so we just leave them alone? No what I am saying is to Genesse, I think I am right, because in my class I am for those children there. And that's my joy. I have to work hard to be with each one of them. I can't know all their cultures, but they are in front of me so I have to find a way to know and understand them, be their friend and teacher. I have to understand first the people that I am responsible for. I have to make my classroom my home. That is where my heart is.

In the second excerpt, the context was that Manzi was chiding Genesse for expecting her students to speak better French. She explained that no matter what background a child came from, she saw her responsibility first and foremost as working to find ways to teach that child from where ever that child happened to be at the time. Manzi related how she overcame the prejudice of other teachers towards her students and achieved results no one had yet achieved with them. She disregarded previous warnings and proceeded to find ways to connect with the child until there was mutual understanding and respect:

> Manzi: To me I am thinking that we have something from our culture that we can use to help the kids to learn. Even if those things are not from their culture or experience, the things I have experienced can help all children to learn. In September when I started to teach [this year], I don't have kids from different communities that I used to talk about. But now I have children with learning difficulties and when I read the report who they are and what they used to do, I was so scared to teach those kids. But the good thing is that I have something in me saying "Manzi why don't you be yourself? Act as if you don't know anything about them and give them a chance to show you who they really are." Which I did. And we connected so good. Two of them are not severe but one is very severe with problems, but the things they were saying they used to do like call names to teachers and refuse to do the work – they haven't done that in my class. And I have one who comes and says "Madame, j'aime toi " and it is so cute, I feel happy to hear her say that. I say "J'aime toi aussi".
>
> (Eric looks puzzled)
>
> Marie: You don't say that in French. "Je t'aime" means "I love you" and "Je t'aime bien" means "I like you", so it is

> grammatically wrong to say "J'aime toi" but it is because they emphasize the "toi" it means they are telling Manzi directly that she is the one they love - I YOU love. (laughter)
>
> Manzi: Before that sentence used to get on my nerves because it is wrong to say it like that. But for this particular kid, because she has problems communicating even in English, I take it as something else. She is trying to communicate.
>
> Anahid: And she is succeeding.
>
> Manzi: She is talking to me, she is not talking to anybody. When the teachers heard that she was saying, "J'aime toi", they couldn't believe it. She hates all the teachers and she hates school. I laugh, because she is communicating with ME.

Manzi's comments point to the significance of Indigenous knowledge in opening doors to combined social and academic success for students. Dei et al. (2000) write that it is the recognition and use of Indigenous (or cultural) knowledge that shows students there are many ways to solve a problem or to experience the world. They explain:

> The promotion of Indigenous knowledges works towards agency and the empowerment of oppressed groups. Educators can employ these ways of knowing to assist students to engage in social action that is both emancipatory and revolutionary (p. 46).

What is important to note here is that recognition of cultural or Indigenous knowledge can provide a wider spectrum of choice to students – it does not mean that any given cultural knowledge will or should replace institutionalized or standardized ways of understanding, rather that students are provided with choices with which they can more or less identify. Dei et al. apply this concept practically in their research on three levels; encouraging the cultural practice of visible minority teachers to show different kinds of knowing and ways to know, underlining the importance of linguistic diversity in classrooms to provide security to ESL and FSL learners, and highlighting the importance of hiring more visible minority teachers:

> The benefits of a culturally diverse staff reflect in areas of knowledge representation as well as linguistic diversity. Teachers and teaching assistants from different racial and ethnic backgrounds can impart their cultural knowledge to students as well as share their particular language skills (p. 186).

Manzi had previously been instrumental in starting a development project to help widows and children with AIDS in Rwanda. Eventually as the magnitude of her teaching responsibilities unfolded, Manzi found herself unable to continue the development work if she wanted to preserve her sanity and family life. It is interesting to see how Manzi approached teaching as both the connecting of individual hearts and as capacity building. Her experience with both her own experience as a refugee and with community development gave her insights into overcoming difficulties that few teachers can claim to match. She worked to guide her students to the realization of their own capacity through mastery of material broken down into simple, realizable steps and surrounded by love and encouragement.

Genesse had a similar approach with ample use of songs, rhythm, debate and lots of laughter. Sensitive to the moods and sentiments of her students, she was able to respond to them with an ebb and flow to her teaching that allowed time for interpersonal relationships while upholding a high standard of excellence and belief that they would succeed. At one point in the discussion, Eric explained that the only way he could meet curricular requirements in several subjects was to pick and choose the most important concepts so that students could pass their government exams. Anahid made a number of comments about how overwhelming curriculum was to her and her colleagues. Genesse, however, responded:

> I thought I would be stressed but I wasn't, I don't know. One experience was really good. It is a lot of stuff to cover. I say to my students at the beginning all the things they have to do and show them all the books and they are scared. I say, "Yes, but I will help you to do all this. Each of you". And I was there at the school. One girl not want to do the homework. I speak with her mom and she say she is not able to help her. So after that I got me or others to stay with her after school to finish it. Sometimes I am very exacting.

It is interesting to me that Genesse classifies herself as a very exacting teacher, yet she did not feel stressed about meeting the constraints of government exams when she taught grade 6. She explained that she was well prepared with curricular justifications but that she used her own methods to get there.

One of the television interview sessions in 2006 on the popular television talk show "Oprah", examined the methodology of a couple of teachers who began a very successful program for underserved students in the United States. Their three word motto to explain their success with underachieving Black and white students from poor families was "rhythm, repetition and rap"; parallels can be drawn from the use of song, rhythm and rhyme in Genesse and Manzi's cultural teaching styles. An Aboriginal cultural liaison worker in six downtown Edmonton schools explained recently to me how the increased infusion of Aboriginal world-view and methodologies has resulted in all students increased learning success and sense of belonging at school.

Although it is beyond the scope of this study, it is not hard to imagine how a close examination of cultural methodologies and subsequent steps to make them available to all teachers could be beneficial to many students. Manzi stated clearly that she believes it is her culture that allows her to connect with marginalized students. The glimpses into classrooms of all four teachers as they unfolded during the study, was inspiring and informative. Consulting rather than silencing our visible minority teachers, may inform our capacity to solve the socio-pedagogical problems that currently perplex us from colonialist, individualist, and consumerist perspectives. Gay (1995, cited in Dei et al., 2000) writes:

> Evidence demonstrates that dramatic improvement in school achievement, learning outcomes and self-esteem can be gained when Eurocentrism is disrupted, when teachers combine high expectations with a plural curriculum and culturally compatible teaching methods (p. 174). Thus a varied teaching style that was originally adopted to suit the "participatory, co-operative and collaborative" learning styles found in afro-Caribbean, Aboriginal communities, would also

> benefit youth from other backgrounds who struggle in more competitive and individualistic educational settings (p. 169).

6.C. *Discussion*: Visible minority teacher experience in the broader North American context

It is hard to imagine how one can be a healthy and productive teacher when faced with the obstacles and added emotional burdens of visible minority teachers described in this chapter. From the supporting quotes of teachers in the United States of Ladson-Billings (1994) and Madsen and Mabokela (2005), the two Canadian studies about the British Columbia Punjabi Sikh teachers (Hirji & Beynon, 2001) and the Ontario context provided by Dei et al. (2000), together with comments of Aboriginal cultural liaison teachers in Manitoba schools, both American and Canadian visible minority teachers appear to face similar problems. Although historically, Canada and the United States are quite different in their race relations developments, I found the comments of teachers in the US studies to be close to the participants of this research project with regard to attitudes of white privilege, attitudes towards racism, over-supervision, racial and cultural assumptions imposed upon them, and responses to tokenism and colonialism. One critical difference between the US and Alberta-Canadian context we are exploring here, is that teachers in this study did not see themselves embedded in an irrevocable historical conflict that prevented relationships between the races from developing. Consider the following comment from one of the American teachers quoted in Madsen and Mabokela (2005) for example:

> There never was a time I felt the racial pressures that were exerted on me in this district would be of major intensity enough

> to make me turn and run. By the time I got to this district, I had been bathed in some of the best racial fires there were. I mean, coming from Mississippi, I had no illusions about what lurked sometimes behind smiles and faces of people we meet. I was tougher than most people who tried to intimidate me (p. 19).

From the above comment, it is obvious that a history of overt racism has forced this teacher to be wary, tough and suspicious. The implication is that racial intimidation of visible minority teachers will continue in schools and one has to be prepared to meet it head on. The only similar scenario of a research participant in this study was the story of Genesse confronting a colleague whom she felt was trying to intimidate and/or discredit her by pointedly staying in her classroom while she taught. Genesse confronted this colleague with a good deal of righteous indignation, and she was confident that she would win. Genesse's subduing of her colleague earned her respect in the school and began friendly relations with certain colleagues who had been indifferent in the past. Although in both scenarios racism was present, possibilities for moving beyond racial conflict appeared to be greater for the participants in this study.

Opportunities to make friends and to increase one's circle of influence across racial difference in and outside of school were both perceived and exploited by participants in this study. Earlier comments in Manzi's life story, for example, point to how she felt loved and cared for by many of her white friends whereas she decried the fact that her own people had tortured and killed her family members and friends. Eric did not find it difficult to infiltrate the ranks of sports teams as a Black player, neither did he hesitate to develop non-sports friendships with teacher colleagues across racial difference.

Anahid married a man outside of her race and culture and Eric was engaged to be married to a white woman, also a teacher. Although the possibilities for interracial marriage could have been a factor in the studies I used for comparison, there was no mention of interracial marriage in any of the American references I used. It seems to me that since participant lives were described in detail, interracial marriage could have come up at some point, leading me to believe that it's absence may be a factor in the frequently polarized comments of American participants. All participants in this study had friends from a variety of different races and ethnic backgrounds and prided themselves in their multicultural friendships, a possibility which may be harder to achieve in the United States where racial demarcation lines are more pronounced.

The particular situation of the participants in this study was that although they had taught in schools with racial and cultural diversity, at the point of the study, they were all the only visible minority teaching staff in their schools, teaching predominantly white students. Note that when Eric's colleague asked him if he had ever seen any Black teachers in the schools where he taught, Eric responded that he had not. Study participants knew that racial isolation was a Canadian reality they would likely be dealing with for most of their careers. In contrast, American teachers from the previously mentioned studies, frequently had several visible minority colleagues on staff, whether or not they counted them among their friends. Additionally, they were used to engaging in contentious and open conflict race issues as part of their daily lives – an almost unthinkable concept for participants in this study. American teachers from both Black and white races did not deny there was racism in their country or in their schools, but this acceptance did not necessarily help resolve race issues. It appeared to be difficult for both white and Black teachers to see beyond past and present race-based conflicts or to imagine a racism-free school.

Canadian teachers in this study were very much aware that race is a taboo topic in Canadian conversations and particularly with regard to Canadian schools. One particularly negative outcome of this denial is the ease with which administrators and other white colleagues could avoid and rename racism, while insisting that impartiality and equity are hallmarks of our education system. It is difficult to deal with an un-namable entity. If racism were recognized and named in Canadian schools, schools would have to take ownership of the problem and strive to resolve it. Failure to do so renders the current position of impartiality and equity untenable.

One possible unexpected outcome of this "Canadian" denial of culpability in race relations is that it appears to have allowed a gray area wherein Canadian visible minority immigrant teachers can begin to negotiate their own space. As this negotiable space develops and is seen to be valuable, it may lead to increased respect for visible minority teacher practice. Two examples of this idea of negotiable space are Genesse's winning of her principal's admiration in spite of his initial over supervision, and Manzi's success with students no other teacher was able to reach, much to the surprise of her colleagues.

Genesse and Manzi's courage in both confronting and more diplomatically dealing with racism, may very well have to do with their position as immigrants. Both were unabashedly proud of their Canadian citizenship and insistent that they would find ways to belong. At the same time they were proud of their race, nationality and culture. Having grown up in a context where everyone else was Black, they had not suffered the effects of having lived with racism as children and were more likely to insist upon their right to be treated justly than their Canadian-born counterparts. In the American studies previously cited, all teachers were born in the United States. The differences between the immigrant and Canadian born participants in this study highlight both the strengths and the potential challenges of a diverse work force that welcomes both Canadian born and newcomer teachers into schools.

As first generation Canadians, Eric and Anahid were less likely to be able to extricate themselves from the multitudinous layers of covert systemic racism they had experienced throughout their lives. The complexities of repercussions they could imagine prompted them to second-guess their decisions. They were also less likely to be credible feigning cultural ignorance, whereas both Manzi and Genesse were aware they could use this in their favor. On the other hand, Eric and Anahid had sophisticated skills of cultural 'switching', and the advantage of being comfortable with difference and with not knowing in new circumstances. This ease with not knowing was less likely for Manzi and Genesse given the gap between their cultural understandings from home and the cultural realities of their lives here. My observation was that whereas the immigrant teachers in this study encouraged the Canadian-born visible minority teachers to be braver in their responses to injustice, the Canadian-born teachers encouraged creativity and willingness to apply cultural knowledge to teaching in the immigrant teachers who were, understandably, more afraid of making mistakes in their "new" country.

Another factor of the teachers in this study that sets them apart from their American counterparts is that all four were bilingual and three multilingual. It is well known that the ability to think and express oneself in several languages promotes flexibility, divergent thinking and creative problem solving (Littlemore, 2001; Kecskes & Papp, 2000; Basadur & Hausdorf, 1996). As was previously mentioned, most Canadian teachers are white, middle class, female, Anglo-Protestant and unilingual. None of the Black teachers in the Madsen and Mabokela (2005) or the Ladson-Billings (1994) studies were bilingual. It would be interesting to determine to what extent the ability to speak several languages promotes the ability to see beyond conflict or to promote harmonious race relations.

6.D. Connection to the literature: ethical implications

Murdock (1997) describes investigations in the social sciences as having ultimately to respond to the following questions:

> What is going on here? Why is it happening as, when and where it is? What does it mean to those involved? Is it, on balance, a good or a bad thing? (p. 183).

He explains that thick descriptions of human experience capture experience on the ground as it is; messy, complex, multifaceted and with layers of meaning superimposing or knotting themselves upon each other. Although he claims that one cannot understand culture without complexity, the questions of how a given experience affects those involved and whether or not their experience is, over a given continuum, beneficial or detrimental, implies an ethical accountability. The experience of the visible minority teachers in this study evokes troubling questions about cultural competency and its relationship to inequity and prejudice in school systems. Although their responses to the difficulties imposed on their professional lives are creative, courageous and inspiring, we cannot dismiss the responsibility of educational systems to critically examine their commitment to diversity.

Certainly the reason all people deserve to live in a prejudice-free environment is because all have the same basic rights as human beings, giving us rightful claim to universality of citizenship. Yet universality does not imply that there is no difference that should be taken into consideration to respond to cultural, social and individual needs. The universality of human right to education cannot imply a pre-packaged, unresponsive application. To insist on sameness of treatment is to collapse the concept of universality of citizenship into uniformity. Bauman (2001), writes:

> Universality of citizenship is the preliminary condition of all meaningful 'politics of recognition'. And, let me add, universality of humanity is the horizon by which all politics of recognition, to be meaningful, needs to orient itself. Universality of humanity does not stand in opposition to the pluralism of the forms of human life; but the test of truly universal humanity is its ability to accommodate pluralism and make pluralism serve the cause of humanity – to enable and to encourage 'ongoing discussion about the shared conception of the good'. Such a test can be passed only as the conditions of republican life are met" (p. 140).

Ellis (1998) writes that "it is frightening to think that any children must endure being read by teachers as inferior and as coming from cultures interpreted as less civilized (p. 237). It is equally frightening to think that the very strengths of visible minority teachers that schools so badly need are not recognized, valued or even worse, considered deficit when it is these very teachers who can help turn the tide of cultural ignorance into informed and reflective practice. Ellis contends:

> Given their own successful experiences in North American school systems, teachers are by and large persuaded of the goodness of the education they received and are not likely to easily change their ideas about good teaching or good curriculum. Further, without minority group or strong ethnic identity experiences of their own, teachers may find it difficult to imagine the significance of these in students' perspectives or students' challenges in developing a positive identity. Paradigm shifts are also unsupported by the dominant discourse of the professional landscape and culture of teaching. Here we find glib rhetoric about "respect for the child" and "individual needs" which glosses over the significant issues of teaching and learning for minority children. Finally, through their own education, educators may be persuaded of Western superiority and may find it difficult not to doubt the ability or question the ways of those different from themselves (Ellis, 1998, pg. 236-237).

From a British perspective, Crozier (2005) finds evidence to support the same conclusions as Ellis in Canada. In his research about Black parents' reports on the downward spiral of Black children of Afro-Caribbean heritage in British schools, he notes that one of the most debilitating factors is teacher cultural incompetence. The 22 Black families that were interviewed, although not quick to point fingers at racism, spoke specifically about teachers' low expectations of their children, the effects of teacher cultural stereotyping as breaking the spirit of Black children, especially Black males, that teacher response to the behavior of Black children was unfair, punitive, random, suspicious or accusatory, and that Black children were regularly suspended from school when upon investigation, the allegations had not been properly investigated or the suspension actually came to light as unwarranted. In conclusion, he writes:

> ...no matter how well intentioned, teachers frequently did not know how to deal with institutional racism or develop an anti-racist approach to their practice (p. 596).

Note that the experiences of Manzi with her son and the experiences of all research participants with regard to staff talk about minority students clearly supports both Ellis and Crozier's findings. It stands to reason that if the current teacher population has difficulty moving towards minority students, an increase in minority teachers is one logical step towards rectifying the situation.

If Alberta school districts are equal opportunity employers, why are there only 4.6% visible minority and Aboriginal teachers in Alberta (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2004)? How does one explain the persistent resistance of white teachers and administrators to understanding and recognizing their visible minority colleagues as valued, competent professionals? How can schools overcome attitudes of tokenism and colonialism if they never hire more than one visible minority teacher per school, if that? The usual discourse from mainstream teachers in the many workshops I have conducted across Alberta upholds that equal opportunity for all requires treating all students the same and providing them with the same material in the same sequence. We know, however, that students have different needs and that treating them all "the same" privileges some and marginalizes others. To extend this to the teacher participants in this study, immigrant, refugee and born-in-Canada visible minority teachers cannot be expected to simply assimilate into the current school culture if they are to contribute meaningfully to schools and continue to empower their students. Schools need to be more welcoming and responsive to the talents and needs of visible minority teachers if schools are to retain them or if school districts are to make a practical commitment to diversity. Dei et al. (2000) write:

> ...an important part of an educational community...is the welcoming environment that is created for students. When community becomes an extension of family, and trust is an integral part of the relationships, a sense of welcome is the result. Within the mainstream system, a sense of community does not exist for all students. Students who do not feel membership in their school community, feel isolated and, as a result, barriers are created and intimidation sets in (p. 165).

A summary of collective discourse from participants' teaching practice descriptions, reveals a number of strengths they brought to their schools as visible minority teachers. I list them as:

1) An understanding of the world that provides both global understandings and localized cultural knowledge to their students.
2) The capacity to attract students from all races who have been marginalized, combined with strategic and culturally

responsive teaching to help underachieving students attain parity.

3) Linking to cultural communities and parents from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, who feel comfortable coming to them with suggestions and concerns.

4) Possessing inside cultural knowledge of immigrant and refugee teachers that can be of assistance to schools in their dealings with various community groups.

5) Teaching informed by a pedagogy of social justice, based on the desire to contribute towards building a more equitable world.

6) Teaching informed by a community centered worldview, that uses the skills of collectivism and oral culture to better understand and integrate students socially.

7) Critical use of the prescribed curriculum tempered by cosmopolitan and social justice agendas.

7) A variety of cultural teaching strategies consciously or unconsciously aimed at providing new insights to content areas and at multiplying avenues of access into learning for students.

8) The conscious use of role model power to positively influence both visible minority and mainstream students.

Given both the amount of work required to “rehabilitate” the majority of white teachers who are resistant to cultural ways of knowing (Marx, 2004) and the results of Isajiw’s (1999) “superordinate goal” interventions discussed in Chapter three, it appears efficient to put efforts into hiring and retaining a larger percentage of visible minority teachers. Not only could this help balance the effects of white privilege in Alberta schools, but it additionally could provide dominant group teachers more opportunities to collaborate with and learn from their visible minority colleagues. A resultant material benefit would be improving current life chances of both immigrant and Canadian born visible minority teachers.

Taking into consideration the significance of visible minority teachers with regard to culturally responsive education, and based on current research previously cited in this chapter, should the current imbalance of minority teachers in Alberta schools be corrected, it is more likely that schools will become diverse communities of learning, with culturally responsive teaching and learning resulting in greater social integration. Bauman (2001) writes in this regard:

> We all need to gain control over the conditions under which we struggle with the challenges of life – but for most of us such control can be gained only *collectively*. Here, in the performance of such tasks, community is most missed; but here as well, for a change, lies community's change to stop being *missing*. If there is to be a community in the world of the individuals, it can only be (and needs to be) a community woven together from sharing and mutual care; a community of concern and responsibility for the equal right to be human and the equal ability to act on that right (p. 149-150).

7.A. What "worked" about this research for participants?

From the cluster theme descriptions and interpretations of the previous three chapters, it appears the research group experience was positive for participants. From all reports individually and within the group, participants explained that our research was important personally and as a way to give and to receive professional support. This sense of mutual support helped the group to feel connected even once the school year had started and they had not met since mid-August. It was at the last research meeting in October that Manzi said "Even though I am very far from here, I feel so close to you all". Participants agreed that just knowing that there were other visible minority teachers "out there" with whom they had a connection, provided a source of strength while teaching.

For me as researcher it was satisfying to note from the transcripts, that participants felt free to speak their minds to the point of speaking about issues of white privilege in the room with me present. There was no hesitation to begin sentences such as, "White people get mad, you know. It is because..." or to say "The schools, the teachers, need to be educated, so that they won't be thinking that things are different form the way the really are". Participants were also mutually encouraging and appreciative of each other's contributions. Eric in particular said that for him, the opportunity to hear what other visible minority teachers did in the classroom was significant, since he was so frequently surrounded by colleagues who had little or no understanding of his particular life experience.

To frame the group research experience, I would like to turn to the *life cycle* group research analysis model developed by Susan Wheelan (2005). Within this model, a group is a living system seeking to maintain balance while moving through change. It establishes internal guidelines and goals, learns to develop self-regulating processes and a shared perception, becomes increasingly able to sense and to give feedback and both accepts to be patterned and seeks to pattern (Wheelan, 2005 quoting Luft, 1984, p. 121). Wheelan identifies the conditions for effective group development as:

- a clear sense of mission and purpose
- clear objectives for good performance
- sufficient autonomy for the group to do its job
- design of the work task is tangible and agreed upon by participants
- participants begin, carry out and end the process together
- design and maintenance of technologies necessary to the task are present
- there is organizational responsiveness to group needs for decisions, information and resources
- adequate feedback
- adequate recognition
- group reward rather than individual reward
- access to training is both technical and interpersonal
- innovation is valued
- openness to influence and consistency in communication (p. 126).

This description captures the group experience of our study and is also an example of positive individual behaviors that influence group functioning.

Since participants expressed like towards, respect for and trust in other group members, were willing to communicate and to interact, had effective, cohesion building communication skills and were assertive in their opinions, we were not hindered in our group development by any of the behaviors stemming from psychological dysfunction described by Geller (2005), for example. There were no dependency issues or flight/flight behaviors, neither was there exclusionary pairing of two members who could have withdrawn from or sabotaged the group functioning. It appeared that there were no feelings of fear or anxiety related to research meetings which, had they been present, would have dramatically changed the capacity of the group to engage with cultural self-discovery. Research participants were enthusiastic and happy to come to the research meetings even when their life circumstances made it difficult for them to do so. They were unified in their common vision of the importance of a justice-centered education and their embracing of teaching for world citizenship. The characteristics of this small group were conducive to the collective production of knowledge rather than the reproduction of knowledge or the development of unhealthy patterns such as groupthink, as was explained in chapter two.

In sum, the required conditions for positive group work were present during the research, which explains its effectiveness for participants. When considering the possibility of a similar process of group development within a school setting, it becomes apparent there are certain difficulties. A clear sense of mission and objective as well as objectives for good performance are rarely addressed with staff and if they are, it is from a standpoint of assumptions or rhetoric rather than from a real sense of solidarity and commitment built through educator input and visioning together. Rarely are teaching objectives agreed upon by participants, rather they are directed downwards from a hierarchy within the education system. Autonomy to work on a task without undue interference, as can be seen from the complaints of visible minority teachers, is also infrequently present. Organizational responsiveness, feedback and rewards are painfully absent from most school contexts; a complaint of both the participants in this study and the participants in my pilot study two years ago. Training for teachers may be technical or interpersonal, but does not often have both characteristics, judging from teachers' convention workshops and professional development initiatives of Edmonton area school districts. In educational studies reviewed for this dissertation, there was a distinct resistance in schools towards innovation and a lack of openness to influence. Although there are notable examples to the contrary such as the Victor Mager school in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Smith, Victor Mager School & Young, 1996) or the Lawrence Heights Middle School in Halifax, Nova Scotia (Spence, 2002), reinforcement of the status quo appears to be more the norm than the exception.

It is of course neither possible nor necessarily realistic for schools to establish the kinds of parameters a research group can build together. During research meetings there was adequate time for process and no outside influences such as student needs, report card deadlines or fixed time slots with heavy agendas to cover. On the other hand, the picture of inadequate or missing healthy group development characteristics in schools needs to be thoughtfully considered if for no other reason than to provide a more supportive and encouraging environment for all teachers. Visible minority teachers' sense of isolation and perception of judgmental attitudes about them can be used as a barometer for school climate, as other teachers are likely to feel those same issues minus conditions of racial and cultural dissonance.

7.B. Analysis of group research process

7.b.i. Individual and collective unfolding of visible minority teacher cultural self-awareness

Exploring the research process can help tease out individual and collective aspects of healthy cultural self-awareness for teachers, which may otherwise be hidden in a purely results-oriented analysis. In a group study such as this, it is difficult to separate individual and collective cultural awareness.

Participants engaged in a gradual unveiling of their lives to each other beginning with lengthy personal introductions interspersed with teacher memories and experiences. Following were complexities of belonging associated with food, clothing, differences in social norms and cultural practice, cultural differences with regard to concept learning and world views, concepts of the role of teachers, social practices related to: birth, gender, interpersonal greetings/relationships, religion, last will and testament and issues of travel and displacement and the effects of losing loved ones. Laced throughout were stories of frustration with a society and school system appearing to have little capacity to make room for diverse views and practices, or empathy for the struggles of newcomers. Associated with these frustrations were concurrent narratives of strategy and triumph with creating friendships and alliances across racial and cultural divides, reaching underserved students and their families, learning to straddle, internalize, reject or critique aspects of cultural practice, and finding spaces of negotiation for cultural variance outside of hegemonic norms. Individual trust in the researcher was key to beginning this process, and trust had to be maintained through the development of mutual concern and friendship, the establishment of communication norms and freedom to express both agreement and dissent.

Brenner (2001, cited in Hogg, 2005), explains this group development process via the concept of *social identity formation*. He writes that individuals absorb a sense of social identity that impacts their individual development through four distinct kinds of relationships. One category is *person-based* meaning that the properties of groups surrounding individuals become internalized by individual members and form a significant portion of the individual's self-concept. In the context of this study, each participant came to the research with a social identity from his/her cultural background that each was able to articulate and understand more fully through the shared research experience. A second category is *relational* where the self acts in relation to specific other people. In this study, each participant related to four others and developed relationships with those others within the group context.

A third category is *group-based* referring to the development of a collective self with regard to in and out-group identification. Each participant had previous in-out group categories (for example, we are African – in-group, they are Canadian – out-group, we are teachers – in-group, they are students – out-group) that formed group identity referents. Within the research group, all participants assumed an additional category of in-group and developed a limited collective identity based on our common research experience. The collective identity in this circumstance is limited because it was related to the beginning and ending of a project, bound by time and space. Another aspect of group-based social identity is that characteristics and attributes of the out-group can be taken into individuals either voluntarily/consciously as cultural strengths or involuntarily/unconsciously as internalized oppression. This group-based identity capacity to see the self in other (groups) and other (group characteristics) in self is critical to learning to cross difference and recognize commonalities.

The final category is *collective identity* where individuals share self-defining characteristics and engage in social action to establish in-group cohesion and to provide a representation for others with which to identify the group. This final social identity category does not apply to the research group in the latter part of the definition, but does with regard to the social action characteristic. Individuals developed more confidence in themselves as cultural beings and as teachers with culture-specific attributes and skills. Through each other's stories and influence, they became empowered to address marginalization and to resolve to claim their rightful places as professionals in their schools.

Social identity formation categories are useful in helping to understand the experience of individuals and groups where a type of third space somewhere between individualist and collectivist social identity can be constructed. Hogg (2005) writes that in individualistic cultures, people can separate their sense of self from the group, frequently based on individual accomplishments and characteristics. In collectivist cultures, one's individuality is defined relationally as one's network of relationships locates the individual within the group and maintains membership (Anahid's mother, Manzi's cousin, Eric's tribe etc). In our research, we created a kind of temporary space where each was recognized as separate from the other in uniqueness and distinctiveness, yet membership in the research group gave the opportunity for each to locate him/herself within the group and to additionally define the two subgroups of immigrant experience, and born-in-Canada visible minority experience. The opportunity for each to reflect on the experience within both a network of cultures and as educators in an educational system, provided a kind of macro experience that impacted upon the micro experience of our small research group.

Another aspect of this temporary space was the attempt to engage in arts experiences related to culture when none of us had the same arts repertoire or language within which we could create common referents. We had to adopt, learn, or create a format within which we could comfortably create. Writing a poem or a letter was a relatively easy neutral building ground for the group because we had a common experience of forms to which we could all refer. Choosing a song to share or trying to create a percussion ensemble were much less bound by shared form and consequently more open and ambiguous. I had hoped to have participants engage the group in learning some aspect of each other's cultures that we could work to understand and partially master as a group. The experience of trying to play the math stones game and of listening to Manzi's story of her mother's last will and testament, for example, showed how difficult this actually is to accomplish.

7.b.ii. Characteristics of a supportive environment for visible minority teachers

To synthesize and summarize theme cluster data of chapters 3-5, it appears that a primary characteristic of a supportive school environment for visible minority teachers is their perception of *openness*. Research participants sensed very keenly the general lack of openness towards them and their experiences. Even very small diversity-friendly openings stood out as beacons to teachers longing for some kind of space in which they could be themselves. An example of this was Anahid's reflection on why she chose to stay in the district she currently works for:

> What helped retain me, was the previous superintendent for the district had an Italian name. And he told me, "Here's my phone number. Call me at any time if you have any questions or comments or anything". He really sounded like he meant it. I never called him…but just that little bit of openness was very comforting.

The fact that somebody in the district had a "different" name was a sign to Anahid that there may be some openness towards her. From there, the step a decision maker in her district took to show her he was interested in hearing from *her* was the reason she decided to stay *in spite of the fact that she never took him up on his offer.* Another example can be found by recalling Eric's conversation with a colleague who asked him if he had ever seen any Black teachers in Edmonton schools. Eric replied that he had not, and the colleague commented further that this was wrong, because Black teachers were needed in Edmonton schools. Again, Eric did not jump to reveal any of his experiences or continue the conversation in that vein, however his colleague's comment demonstrated an openness and desire for both equity and social inclusion to Eric. A colleague who did not shy away from issues of race provided Eric with a zone of comfort he previously had not felt.

Consider, in contrast, Manzi's frustrated exclamation, "THIS IS HOW MUCH THEY DO NOT KNOW!" when revealing the HIV/AIDS condition of an African student to a principal who did not care, or Genesse's comment about her cooperating teacher's "mean" behavior that reduced her self-confidence to the point where she felt she had lost knowledge rather than gained from the experience. These experiences demonstrate, albeit confined by the limitations of the study, how resistance to knowledge that comes as a result of both false perceptions of the other and fear of difference can be deeply painful to the person experiencing this negation.

The second critical condition appears to be *willingness to offer support*, especially in the beginning when teachers are new and vulnerable. This willingness requires listening, asking rather than assuming, and consideration of the new person as a professional with expertise to be discovered. A frequent complaint of research participants was that others placed a deficit judgment on them because their life experience was different from the dominant culture. In the Madsen and Mabokela study (2005) one participant was even called "culturally deficient" by a white colleague who then offered to help "fill" the deficit by taking the Black colleague to his church. It is important to note that support of others involves a peer relationship rather than an assumption of cultural superiority. On this point, Anahid said:

> Give them a chance! Listen, try to be open minded, work WITH them rather than leaving them all by themselves. Some mentorship and support, help with resources.

This condition of willingness to offer support is neither new nor specific to the participants in this study, but can be extended generally to both new teachers or any teacher recently employed into a new school. Note that in the particular school situations of participants of this study, although they were keen to learn about their new surroundings and to discover their new colleagues, this was not perceived by them to be reciprocal.

A third critical condition is the offering of *hospitality*. Sharing food, greeting and smiling, including visible minority teachers in staff room conversations, showing caring consideration for the feelings of visible minority teachers when discussing visible minority students, inviting visible minority colleagues to participate and valuing their contributions – all these characteristics contribute to a climate of support where visible minority teachers do not feel like a "token hire".

Students appeared to more frequently provide some of the conditions of hospitality than colleagues. Following their initial surprise and curiosity about their visible minority teachers, students appeared to want to know more about the cultures, languages, customs and experiences of their teachers and to be like them. Manzi said:

> Even this girl with the communicating problem she says, "How can we go to your country?" I tell them it is a very long trip. Maybe when you are grown up you can go. They want to go. They want to do the same as my experience.

Eric explained how a boy in his class wanted to know how to say hello in Eric's language and consistently used that greeting with him once he knew it. Genesse spoke about how her students "loved it" when she wore the green dress and headpiece from her mother in Cameroon. During recess, students wanted to hold her hand and find out about her experiences. Anahid said:

> Today I was getting every kid to show where their friends came from. And I told them where I went traveling and they started to tell me where they have traveled to…it was motivating, and it was easy for them to go to the next step – knowing where I traveled, they are very interested. They like it.

Would it be so difficult for fellow teachers to show the same interest and enjoyment as their students, in getting to know and appreciate their visible minority colleagues?

Finally, the condition of *willingness to critically read the curriculum* and to *make space for a plurality of perspectives* is essential to an atmosphere where we can all learn to better live together (Delors, 1996). Although it has not been explored in historical detail, in this study the damaging attitudes of white superiority emerge in comments, assumptions and body language of dominant society members in their interactions with visible minority teachers. Other studies have documented this same issue (Particularly: Schick & Denis, 2005; Torres, Santos, Peck & Cortes, 2004; Marx, 2004; Hay, Khalima & Van Bavel, 2003; Dee & Henkin, 2002; Solomon & Razai-Rashti, 2001; Carr & Klassen, 1997; Haberman & Post, 1995). Until we are willing to see this problem and work to include the voices of the silenced and marginalized, there will be no secure space within which visible minority teachers can make their mark.

Surely, it is possible for people of different races and cultures to see the world critically and use that understanding to inform their words and deeds. Space to include and validate a plurality of perspectives and experiences could lead to space where stories of visible minority teachers could be voiced and heard. According to the participants in this study, that space is currently not present in Alberta schools, and contributes to the maintenance of inequity. Creating such a space however, requires an attitude of humility and a sincere desire to know others across race, creed, culture, language and norms. Both Davis (2006) and Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey and Terrell (2006) call this *Cultural Profiency*. The latter authors explain cultural proficiency in the following manner:

> Rather than lamenting, "Why can't *they* be like *us*?" leaders and educators welcome and create opportunities to better understand who they are as individuals, while learning how to

> interact positively with people who differ from themselves…The culturally proficient organization closes the door on tokenism and stops the revolving door through which highly competent, motivated people enter briefly and exit quickly because they have not been adequately integrated in the organization's culture" (p. 4-5).

7.b.iii. Prerequisites of support: whiteness re-examined through the lens of cultural proficiency and social identity theory

Although it is helpful to identify the characteristics of a supportive environment for visible minority teachers, there are certain pre-requisites to the creation of such a climate. As the study progressed and through continuous re-examination of the data, I found the considerations of race and culture on identity formation to be so foundationally lacking in the teaching contexts participants described, as to render the establishment of a supportive school climate close to impossible. An understanding of social identity and the ramifications of race and culture on that identity, informs burgeoning desire to rectify inequity.

Reading the account of how Lawrence Heights Middle School (Spence, 2002) was able to provide a supportive and equitable teaching and learning environment for Halifax students, one is struck by the sense of mission based on belief in the necessity for social justice, which informs Christopher Spence's leadership philosophy and practice. He feels very deeply the problems of unequal treatment based on race and culture because he himself is Black and has first hand experience with learning to overcome these barriers. On the other hand, Spence surrounds himself with educators of all races that espouse a vision of an equal world, see the inequities around them and work to eradicate them as much as possible. Additionally, children at Lawrence Heights Middle School see a variety of community leaders of all races working in the school with authority, inclusion and respect. This is not to say that there are no challenges or difficulties, neither does Spence insinuate that with the provision of an inclusive school climate, no other social problems affect students and teachers. It is, however, a big step in the direction of working towards the ideal of education as "the great equalizer".

Secondly, recognition of the necessity to promote cultural proficiency is critical. Learning to move beyond limited perceptions of others requires an umbrella of understandings that Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey and Terrell (2006) identify as:

1. Culture is a predominant force; you cannot NOT be influenced by culture.
2. People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.
3. People have group identities that they want to have acknowledged.
4. Cultures are not homogeneous; there is diversity within groups.
5. The unique needs of every culture must be respected (p. 4).

The first four principles have been sufficiently discussed throughout this dissertation. As a caveat to the last principle, I would like to add that we are considering culture for this context in the light of how groups of people have learned to "do things" in various societies around the world. Culture, for our immediate intents and purposes, is based on ways a group has learned to survive and meet most basic needs of people within that group, establish norms, build institutions and discipline attempts to harm others. Within any culture there will be unhealthy practices (for example sexism is prevalent everywhere and has stopped humanity as a whole from advancing), but a culture that develops out of complete lack of healthy parameters (eg. cultures of violence frequently develop out of lack of opportunity to participate normally in society. See Connell, 2000), cannot ethically be considered to be of neutral value. Gangs for example may be considered a response to lack of community building and absence of usual membership opportunities (Wagner, 1999), that need to be named and critiqued rather than considered equal under the guise of "cultural respect".

A culture of violence, which may have replaced healthy human interaction norms, is antithetical to a culture of peace, which seeks to minimize or eliminate the possibility of harm to its members. One cannot tolerate the other for its counterpart to thrive. To naively affirm all aspects of culture, may lead to as much harm as its current lack of acknowledgement has produced. As an example of how important it is to develop a critical reading of culture, I refer to the example of teachers in a school who refused to stop the fighting between two Black students under the premise that the Black students were having a "cultural problem". Fighting between two white students would not have been tolerated under the guise of "cultural problem".

Returning to the recommended guidelines above, Robins et al. (2006) continue their summary of the requisites for cultural proficiency as recognition of three barriers, which can easily be applied to the findings of this study.

> 1. *The presumption of entitlement:* Believing that all of the personal achievements and societal benefits that you have were accrued solely on your merit and through the quality of your character.
>
> 2. *Systems of oppression:* Throughout most organizations are systems of institutionalized racism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, and ableism. Moreover, these systems are often supported and sustained without the permission of, and at times without the knowledge of, the people whom they benefit. These systems perpetuate domination and victimization of individuals and groups.
>
> 3. *Unawareness of the need to adapt:* Not recognizing the need to make personal and organizational changes in response to the diversity of the people with whom you and your organization interact. Believing instead that only the others need to change and adapt to you (p. 4).

If the above three barriers were thoughtfully addressed by dominant culture Alberta educators and the institutions that hire them, Vergès' (2002) project of bringing back what has been erased by white supremacy may begin to be realized. From the research participants' perspectives Genesse comments:

> But many of the colleagues I meet - they don't have that experience. They only know their way, their culture…even if they read, that helps, but if you don't get IN it is like learning a language…I am *in* everything here, so it is a different experience than learning *about* it…

Manzi's comment about her own cultural awareness journey is equally applicable to white teachers who begin the process of recognizing the above three barriers to cultural proficiency. It is interesting to consider her comment from the perspective of both visible minority and white teachers:

> …you have to accept positively all the frustration you are experiencing in your teaching because you have a baggage of tradition and culture. You have to look at it and say, "Am I going to take this with me or not?" And move. And it takes time, one, two, 20 years. But we have to be willing to meet that world, do you understand?

From a social identity perspective however, it is possible to better understand why there appears to be so much resistance to difference from the dominant culture. Hogg (2005) writes that people use social categories to make sense of social contexts and look for as close a "fit" as possible to their understanding of the world. We come to meet others through stereotype, which Hogg terms "depersonalization". The person I meet who is other to me, is depersonalized through my association of that person with the limited information or stereotypes I hold regarding members of people in that group. As I look for salience between my beliefs and the behavior of the other, I make changes to my beliefs based on how closely the individual matches my stereotypical concept. If race categories do not apply, the search for a "fit" moves to other categories such as cultural, political, religious, professional, hobbies etc. until some kind of salience is obtained. Bruner (1957, cited in Hogg, 2005) observed that people go to great lengths both cognitively and socially to make salience possible, because they are motivated by either self-enhancement/distinction ("our" people don't do things that way, and that makes "us" better) or uncertainty reduction. Because people have a tendency to buffer themselves against negative distinctiveness, they tend to evaluate their own culture/race/religion etc. as superior. This reduces uncertainty and strengthens identification with a group, reducing further the discomfort of uncertainty.

Concurrently, an individual's tolerance of uncertainty increases with cultural proficiency (Bennett, 1998; Hofstede, 1997). When effort, experience and awareness are combined to improve personal cultural proficiency, ethnorelativity is frequently one of the natural outcomes. Ethnorelativity, also referred to by Bennett as "cultural humility" (Bennett and Bennett, 2004), refers to the capacity to suspend judgment and to bracket personal/cultural values responses until adequate information is received with which to make an informed decision. Rather than assuming others are wrong because they do things differently, the individual realizes that most initial impressions are stereotypical or wrong and consequently strives to get more information, build relationships and wait to make judgments, or not make a judgment at all, due to perceptions of incoming information as inadequate or faulty. Adaptations to cultural norms are made in an attempt to "meet in the middle" and find common bonds upon which friendships can be built. When this process becomes more and more natural, it is seen by Bennett as indicative of culturally proficient behavior.

As an interesting aside, Hogg cites Brewer (1991) in his explanation of group behaviors by showing that human beings are driven by conflicting motives for inclusion and distinctiveness (another take on the recognition/redistribution paradigm of Taylor and Fraser from chapters 1-3). Apparently, small groups satisfy the drive to distinctiveness, so individuals within small groups frequently move towards social conformity in order to belong within a small group context. Large groups on the other hand, satisfy the drive to inclusiveness and consequently people tend to insist on uniqueness to seek some kind of balance within large groups. Brewer thus recommends the possibilities of mid-sized groups as a possible way to reduce both behavior extremes. This recommendation points to the possibilities of schools as sites for cultural proficiency; in most schools, teachers form a mid-sized group and could therefore be, according to Brewer, a more efficient working group, considerably more likely to apply new understandings to practice.

Another aspect of Brewer's theme is that within groups people are also motivated by *personal attraction* and *social attraction*. Personal attraction can lead to exclusion of others because one is more strongly motivated to spend time with another person to whom one is personally attracted, a possible explanation for why visible minority teachers are frequently left out or exoticized. Whereas social attraction leads individuals in a group to include those who exhibit the most stereotypical manifestations of in-group norms and to consider more discrepant behaviors as deviant, resulting in rejection of individuals whose cultural norms do not match the status quo. In both kinds of attraction, the minority individual loses out: a viable, albeit unacceptable, explanation for the experiences participants in this study endured in the staff room.

A more acceptable response to the tendencies of groups to exclude those who are perceived as other is a conscious affirmation of the benefits of diversity, particularly by the leadership in organizations. Again, Hogg (2005) provides a useful insight from social identity theory. He cites the benefits of diversity as follows:

- combats social conformity
- improves group decision making
- provides a real presence of minority views (which will result in more representative responses to critical issues in the organization)
- improves tolerance for internal criticism (leading to a more critical reading of status quo assumptions and reduction of barriers to cultural proficiency)
- promotes the internalization of diversity by the group and becomes part of the group's social identity
- generates more diverse patterns of group functioning which keeps the group productive and reduces marginalization (p. 144).

Courageous leadership that continues to insist upon the benefits of diversity is more likely to provide the conditions necessary for an environment of support that attracts and retains visible minority teachers.

7.C. Research question conclusions

7.c.i. How issues of culture inform and shape the teaching practice of four visible minority teachers

Specifics of culturally informed visible minority teacher practice of both participants in this research and those of other studies have been discussed in detail in the preceding chapters. In summary, culturally informed visible minority teacher practice currently takes the shape of concern for social inclusion with particular emphasis on helping underperforming students to succeed. It is more likely to use song, humor, game and other creative tools to promote a climate of interdependence and inclusion, but it is also more likely to be exacting and rigorous, giving students less opportunity to get away with sloppy, incorrect or incomplete work. There is a critical reading of the curriculum and greater likelihood that students will have their assumptions and biases about the world challenged and placed in the context of social justice. A sense of belonging to a collective identity (or several) shapes both teacher perception of self as relational to others and of students as relational to each other, their families and their communities.

Based on the findings of this study, which is of course influenced by the presence of three African participants with collectivist value orientations, visible minority teaching practice is likely to have holistic readings of students, to engage parents and other family members in gaining "chunks of information" about students, and to consider the social/community context of academic failure prior to applying strategies to remedy the situation.

The teaching practice of this study's participants, seeks to create a welcoming and inclusive learning environment. As informed by the skills and values of oral, collective cultures, culturally informed visible minority teaching practices hospitality and demonstrates willingness to listen, observe and be patient in getting to know students and their learning needs. Scaffolding strategies to help students work gradually towards academic mastery are likely to be provided. Willingness to wait for academic results, while fully believing that those results are imminent and that all students are capable, was a common attitude among all four participants.

Their general curricular approach appears to be an embracing of the cosmopolitan project of global citizenship and a consistent effort to include a plurality of perspectives, experiences and histories in social analysis. Although it is rarely addressed directly, attention to racism is an ongoing characteristic of visible minority teaching experience and informs the decision to engage the social justice mission of teaching.

Immigrant teachers in this study were more likely to address injustice and to stand up for their rights than visible minority teachers who had grown up in Canada. Immigrant teachers were also more likely to have to attend to extended family needs and problems, to be called as conflict resolution mediators for other immigrant families and to be targeted as “Black experts” by colleagues than their born-in-Canada visible minority colleagues.

All study participants showed evidence of being perceived by marginalized students of any race as “approachable”, resulting in increased requests for help from underserved students. Participants were equally impacted by underlying attitudes of racism and general lack of cultural knowledge of their colleagues. This had the result of undermining their confidence to try new things, but this was less apparent for those participants who were born here than for their immigrant colleagues. Although all four participants expressed confusion about culture and the degree to which culture could be overtly addressed in the classroom, the Canadian visible minority teachers were more comfortable with ambiguity and willing to make mistakes, in spite of their statements that they found it difficult to do so. Their practice, in fact, showed high creativity and willingness to take the risk of using controversial materials. They were also likely to have friends and spouses from different races and cultures and to have a wide experience of and comfort with ambiguity in travel.

Immigrant teachers had to spend more time affirming their children's cultural attachments to the homeland and were concerned about their children's uncritical acceptance of negative stereotypes of their own race and culture. All four participants expressed a need to travel to wherever they felt they could be less visible to re-establish a sense of balance and normalcy in their lives and to avoid any tendencies to adopt negative attitudes towards their own cultures. Additionally participants were able to provide a more holistic reading of the world to their students from the experience of learning several languages and having to gain proficiency in English.

Although there were distinct differences between how immigrant visible minority teachers and born-in-Canada visible minority teachers demonstrated culture in teacher practice, a common thread in the research was the unfolding process of cultural awareness and self-affirmation. As predicted, all participants came to the study with a much more informed sense of who they were culturally than the white participants in my previous pilot study. Ghosh and Abdi (2004) affirm that the reality of having to project oneself against a backdrop of whiteness forces visible minorities to think about who they are and want to be, whether or not they are able to articulate it.

Manzi's reflection on her adaptation to post-secondary school in Alberta confirms the above statement when she asked herself why she was not learning as quickly in Canada as she did in Africa. At that point that she became aware of cultural difference and began her personal process of cultural inquiry. Genesse too began her cultural journey prior to the research and explained that she found it frustrating that in Quebec everyone spoke the same French language, yet she frequently did not understand what others were saying or intending. Her cultural awareness journey continued when she decided to go to university and become a teacher. Genesse stated that prior to making that decision, she was "just visiting" the culture here and only really confronted the problems of racism and cultural difference when she was ready to make Canada her home. Eric stated that his practice was directly impacted by the fact that he was a Black teacher in a predominantly white society and mentioned once that people might think he should "go back to Africa". Additionally, he noted that when he first came to Canada as a child, his usually outgoing personality became introspective and sad.

Anahid, having already completed a Master's degree in education and worked in a remote Aboriginal community, had the advantage of prior reflection time to consider the effects of racism and internalized oppression, yet had not considered herself within the context of other visible minority practitioners prior to the study. All four participants, however, appeared to go through a similar process of self-awareness with regard to their cultural attachments and teaching. This awareness prompted them to identify some of their successful culture-based teaching strategies and to gain an increased appreciation for their applicability to current teaching contexts. Emerging from this process was a sense of pride and subsequent courage to take cultural practice openly into the classroom. As Manzi said at the last research meeting in October:

> But today I know that what I already know will also help me in my teaching. That's the difference. Before I used to do it because I am who I am, but I wouldn't want another teacher to see me doing it that way. Because I am using culture...Today I am not afraid, shy or ashamed... I used to do it, but I wasn't sure it was the right thing to do. But now there is nothing that can stop me to talk about it!

On the other hand, this sense of pride did not have the effect of erasing doubts, as can be seen from the response Eric provided to Anahid in the following excerpt:

> Anahid: I think Eric has a lot of confidence.
>
> Eric: Well, no I don't think I do. The short answer is yes, it [participation in this study] has increased my confidence. I feel confident that if I do anything cultural in my teaching that I can

> do it. But I don't think I have confidence at all generally, I mean. Sometimes, well…I always doubt myself. This kid is looking at me and it is a lot of pressure to teach properly.

And also expressed by Manzi as:

> …I always ask my question "Is this good, what I did? Can I do it another way?"… I think I will continue to ask myself these questions.

7.c.ii. Outcomes of culture-oriented arts-based inquiry with collaborative conversation

The main focus of this research was participant cultural identity as it relates to teaching practice. Collaborative conversation was the vehicle whereby participants engaged in personal and professional exploration of culture in their lives. To further enhance the process, I employed several prompts that were external to the group, but impacted the internal group dynamics and group process. Since the bulk of this thesis deals with data gained through collaborative conversation, this section will concentrate primarily on outcomes of arts-based inquiry. Arts prompts were:

- creating a collage/chalk pastel image of places of memory,
- writing a poem about cultural attachments,
- creating a dramatic tableau of a time participants felt excluded and one about a time they felt included,
- asking participants to bring a song that represented something significant for them (only two accepted this invitation and both

- brought CDs from various cultural influences. The other two spoke frequently about using songs in their teaching but mentioned that since they came to Canada, they were reticent to share these songs with adults),
- mutual creation of a percussion ensemble with instruments of various countries,
- requesting participants to create or bring a visual expression of culture that was meaningful to them and
- writing an imaginary letter to a person who influenced participants' decisions to become a teacher, either from a positive or negative standpoint.

With the exception of the song request, all suggested arts prompts were welcomed by participants who said on several occasions that they would have liked starting with the arts prompts and would have enjoyed spending much more time developing them. I hesitated to do this because I wanted to keep the research focus on participants' articulations of cultural understanding rather than preoccupation with arts learning. Because the participants were interested in and enthusiastic about the arts prompts, it might be an interesting follow-up to take the arts processes further and find out what cultural insights are provided when participants spend more time creating and less time talking.

The enthusiasm of participants for arts prompts in this study, stands in stark contrast to the attitude of teachers from my pilot study who had high anxiety reactions to the arts prompts and were reluctant to engage without assurance that they would not be judged on their arts "performance". Although I do not have sufficient evidence to make an appropriate analysis of these differences, I hazard a guess that the visible minority participants in this study had a more natural experience with the arts in their childhood experiences where singing, dancing, games and dramatic rituals were woven daily into their lives. Anahid however, with direct music education training was the most hesitant about using music to make cultural inferences and after living in Canada for several years, both Manzi and Genesse no longer sang in the presence of adults. The Canadian norm of separating music making and especially singing, from daily life, may have made participants more hesitant to express themselves in this manner. Participants in the pilot study may have been more likely to associate the arts with a talented, elite few. Irrespective of their general orientations however, both groups of participants came to the same conclusion about using arts prompts generally for exploration of culture: the arts stimulated different ways of thinking and had the effect of generating creative approaches to teaching that were more responsive to diverse learning styles.

In retrospect, I think the song request was not as successful a prompt as the others because participants knew that I directed a choir and had two adult children who were professional musicians. Their reticence to contribute a song was likely influenced by this prior knowledge; however, the enthusiasm with which they participated in the percussion ensemble demonstrated that we were all on an equal playing field with our capacity to create in this way. It was particularly gratifying to participate in the percussion ensemble experience, and when we spoke about it later, participants unanimously agreed that it was simply fun and stress relieving to create together in this manner. As an added benefit, the group percussion prompt gave them ideas about group projects with students for the future. The percussion prompt also brought out participants' use of music in the classroom, and reminded Anahid of her successful music experience with a group of newcomer students to Canada from grades 1-6 during her first year of teaching. Ahahid's description of this experiment provided everyone with a useful strategy for social inclusion when language is a barrier.

Dramatic tableaux were interesting in that they showed how issues of exclusion for visible minority teachers frequently took place in staff rooms and became sites associated with racial and cultural tensions. Stories of negative talk about students, and tensions related to food and hospitality can be traced to the tableau prompt. The value of the poem and letter writing experience was more in the sharing and explaining than the actual writing. Participants were quite reluctant to show their writing and did not submit any written reflections although I requested them several times. I attribute this partly to the language issue; all but one were conscious of the fact that English was their third or fourth language and they did not want to lose face by showing any English "mistakes" to a doctoral candidate. Had the research taken place in French (minus the participant who did not speak French), it is likely participants would have been more willing to share their writing.

The other issue is that participants were simply more comfortable orally, where they could take in each other's facial expressions, listen for tone and intent, and respond to each other in a collective setting. Similar comparisons can be made with participants' explanations of their collage/chalk pastel landscape images. Participants were eager to talk together as they created (I initially asked them to create silently, but this seemed irrelevant later) and enjoyed explaining their visual creations to the group. The actual images were less important that what they represented to participants and the questions and comments they generated. As I became more aware of oral culture preferences and skills throughout the research, I was confirmed in my initial decision to employ collaborative conversation methodology.

Other non-arts based external prompts were articles about culture and teaching from three very different perspectives. Of particular significance were the additional math and culture articles brought into the research about half way into the process, resulting in Manzi sharing her math stones game. There was also an external prompt from a situation I experienced at work: my colleague from Kenya and I had a discussion about female genital mutilation and I brought this topic into the research group to see what the African participants would have to say about this controversial issue with regard to cultural identity.

In examining the utility of these prompts to the research process, I found the initial articles less pertinent than the spontaneous decision to use the math articles. The difference between the first three articles and the subsequent math articles was the latter orientation towards practical teaching strategies rooted in cultural practice. Participants realized immediately how the math strategies from other cultures related to their own teaching and became excited about the possibilities of finding other links that pertained directly to them.

The genital mutilation issue resulted in a description by the two immigrant teachers of the conflicting understandings of traditional practices from their countries with either colonizer world-views or subsequent education they received. This discussion demonstrated how people from their countries are able to separate aspects of their cultural practice that appear conflicting to outsiders but do not seem problematic to people in that situation. The same tendencies can be found here; for example, an individual can be truly kind and generous to people of his/her own race while showing racist attitudes towards those of another race, apparently without inner dissonance.

In conclusion, the arts prompts served a number of purposes in the research process, not the least of which was enjoyment and relationship building within the group, and were able to trigger past memories and cultural concepts that may otherwise have remained hidden in collaborative conversation alone. On the other hand, collaborative conversation was an effective research methodology to explore with participants who were generally speaking, most comfortable in oral culture traditions. Other external prompts contributed to the research process by providing concrete examples to which participants could anchor their own experience.

7.c.iii. Collaborative conversation reflections

It may be useful to others to consider the particular conditions and practices of this collaborative conversation context that led to the rich and frank disclosures of participants. Firstly I believe my willingness to go through whatever was necessary to gain trust and my patience when the majority of possible participants declined to participate (for reasons already explained in the first two chapters), pre-disposed me to deeply appreciate and value those four participants who agreed to commit. I did not take their trust for granted and worked to sustain it. The study required researcher vigilance to ensure that both participant trust and perception of researcher openness was a work in progress rather than a given. I sincerely wanted to hear from the participants *on their own terms*. To work towards this goal I carefully measured my own speaking time and set self-correcting internal parameters after typing and re-reading the transcripts from each meeting. I overtly validated participants and verbally complimented them on their contributions and insights. This encouraged participants to speak more and with increasing freedom; concurrently, participants showed increased appreciation for each other.

As in the pilot research project, once appreciation and validation parameters were clearly established, internal critiques and differences of opinion became more pronounced, yet this had the effect of energizing rather than silencing individuals. Although there were individual differences and some personalities were more extroverted or more emotional than others, I think that as my admiration for the group members grew, their willingness to disclose reached greater proportions. Participants appeared to feel safe enough to voice either agreement or disagreement, appreciation or critique of each other and of me, but always expressed in a respectful and caring manner.

In part, the trust process arose out of the hospitable atmosphere that surrounded the research meetings. In addition to sincere interest and participant validation, the research context was my own home. The décor is a multicultural mix that invites conversation about culture. At every meeting I offered snacks, fruit and baking, tea, coffee and juice, going out of my way to serve the participants and to tend to their comfort and enjoyment. This is a characteristic of the hospitality I have experienced in the homes of immigrant friends from diverse cultures and I believe it was a critical factor in the success of the collaborative conversations of this research.

I felt humbled and honored to have been the recipient of my participants' disclosures about their lives, their deep feelings and their struggles. We both laughed together and were moved to tears on a number of occasions. I disclosed some stories from my life as they did, participated in the arts activities I asked them to do and revealed my doubts, concerns and confusion over aspects of the research to participants. Concern that my contributions be minimal and worry that I might in some way overpower them were constant preoccupations. Even so, I considered myself an integral part of the collaborative learning process rather than merely an observer or recorder. As researcher, I found this ongoing consideration of multiple roles complex, but ultimately necessary since learning is messy and requires responses from a variety of possible positions. Some of these roles included that of sympathetic listener, challenger, teaching colleague, hostess, instructor, resource person, artist, friend, facilitator and coach. In summary, the above conditions, and the capacity to play a variety of researcher roles, combined with previously described effects of arts prompts, incident prompts and reading culture-related articles all contributed to the quality and quantity of participant talk.

7.D. Ongoing concerns and implications

7.d.i. Participant recommendations to universities and school districts with regard to attracting and retaining visible minority teachers

Participants were quick to come up with suggestions for universities and school districts when I asked for them during our final research meeting. Regarding attraction of visible minority candidates to education faculties and school districts, Eric and Anahid had the following recommendations:

> Eric: I don't know how it works but when universities are recruiting they go to schools and they should get students from different cultures to be the university representatives so the high school students see that there is cultural diversity in the education faculty, so they can see themselves there too. It might help students and teachers. Teachers will see diversity and get some inspiration from that. A situation where you don't actually look to increase your diversity isn't going to help. And then don't place the visible minority teachers in all-white schools. Place them where the visible minority students are so that they see the teachers as role models.

> Anahid: I think the districts need to be proactive in their hiring practices. To say overtly, "We ARE looking for people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds". And all their adds should say "We are equal opportunity employers" – that statement should be on everything that goes out to advertise for jobs. Above and beyond that, perhaps the administration could seek out people from the community and make sure they feel welcome in the

> school, so that there are at least some different skin colors of people in the schools even if they aren't teachers. The community will be more trusting of schools. And personal communication rather than just pieces of paper. Talk to people.

With regard to retention of visible minority teachers, Eric and Manzi reiterated the importance of welcoming, greetings and hospitality and Anahid related the incident of the superintendent with an Italian name who made a point of telling her she should call him with her questions or comments. Manzi additionally stated:

> What I want to say is that other teachers should know that there are people coming from other cultures. The fact that they don't know or use their [Canadian] culture, is not because they are not good teachers, it is because they are not familiar with [Canadian] culture. But they have other things they can use. Perhaps if they give them time to learn this new culture, they can bring other things into education that will be useful.

Eric concluded with the following comment:

> For me personable staff. And principal. Someone who doesn't have to always take charge of everything. Asking for feed back but then actually taking that input and using it in the decision-making. And when a situation comes up, ask sometimes what to do. So you feel comfortable that you are all trying to solve this together.

7.d.ii. Implications for pre-service and in-service teacher professional development

Considering the findings of the McGregor and Ungerleider (2004) and Solomon and Rezai-Rashti (2001) studies with regard to both lack of attention to the needs of visible minority teacher candidates and in-service teachers' unconscious attitudes of white privilege, a thoughtful re-consideration of both teacher preparation and teacher professional development is in order. At the very least, such considerations need to identify the strengths and particular understandings of the world which visible minority teachers bring to education in Canada, and should honestly and openly give voice to visible minority teachers issues and concerns. McGregor and Ungerleider (2004) decry the toothless and ineffective approach of multiculturalism in Canadian education. Mansfield and Kehoe (1994) on the other hand write that anti-racist approaches to multiculturalism in education are reductionist, polarizing and antagonistic. Kehoe and Mansfield (1993) seek to reconcile the aims of multiculturalism and anti-racism in education.

What I am proposing as a result of this study, is neither a multicultural nor an anti-racist approach to teacher preparation and ongoing professional development. Rather, it is the engagement of both white and visible minority teachers in a dual process of both cultural self-awareness and recognition of the common responsibility to rectify injustice, informed by cultural studies and research into relevant teaching practice for diversity (for example: Davis, 2006; Robins at al., 2006). It involves the moral leadership capacity to "offer solace and bring joy" (McLaughlin Noguci, Hanson and Lample, 1992).

In this engagement, a most productive approach seems to be working together towards a common project, as demonstrated in the prejudice reduction studies cited by Isajiw (1999). Proof that this mutual effort towards a common project is possible, can be found in the fabric of this study's participant lives: two of the four were married to people from different races, one was able to emotionally "replace" family members she lost in the Rwandan genocide with white friends she loved equally, and another carved a space for herself in a predominantly white school where the principal came to openly value her contributions and parents admired her cultural approaches and successes with teaching their children.

This study seeks to address the current lack of information about visible minority teacher experience in Canada. It attempts to highlight differences and similarities between visible minority teachers who were born in Canada, immigrated here or came as refugees. Additionally, it compares findings to similar studies in North American contexts. Universities can benefit from these findings to improve current teacher preparation initiatives. School districts can be better prepared to hire and retain visible minority teachers from the insights provided through the voices of participants in this study. And the common project to which we are more and more turning our attention is that of social inclusion of currently underserved, socially marginalized and/or underperforming student populations.

I believe this study has demonstrated both the spaces of joy and pain experienced by four visible minority teachers currently working in Alberta schools. It demonstrates the many ways teacher cultural practice provides insights into responsive teaching and learning, particularly with regard to the strengths of oral, collectivist cultural contributions. Additionally, micro-level indicators of openness to cultural sharing and the delicate process of moving from food, dress, and custom to more intimate intercultural friendship building have been highlighted.

In conclusion, I would like to return momentarily to the metaphoric title for this study, "horizons of the possible". The four participants and I stood each at our own horizon with our individual attachments to various aspects of culture. Finding these attachments together and highlighting their differences was a discovery process for each of us. Yet this individual processing did not stop us from looking with enthusiasm and hope towards the horizon of educational possibility together.

Enriched by our group exploration, sharing and mutual creation process, we have become better equipped to walk together towards that horizon. Singer/songwriter Sarah Harmer wrote, "You are a map of a place I might like to visit". This study has begun to draw a map of intercultural roads "less traveled" within the Alberta teacher experience. But the journey on those new roads has just begun.

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APPENDIX A

Crossroads of Possibility: exploring teacher cultural identity

Marie Gervais
Ethics Review Application

Overview of Research Project

Purpose and Significance

This research is about a small group of Aboriginal and visible minority in-service teachers engaging in an exploration of their relationships with culture, identity and practice. Within the framework of collaborative conversation and arts-based responses, participants will ask themselves the questions: *What is culture? What roles do my own cultural affiliations and experiences play in my sense of self as teacher? How does my own perception of the role of culture in teaching and learning affect my teaching practice?*

My underlying research motivation is a desire to identify and analyze the *processes* of teacher growth as participants reflect on the above questions together and individually. I hope to document culture-informed reflections on practice through a combination of researcher-observations, participant self-reports and group responses. I am particularly interested in a) the relationship between cultural identity and practice and b) the relationship between collaborative conversation and arts-response in the context of cultural understanding. Ultimately I hope to contribute to effective teacher education for intercultural teaching and learning in both pre-service and in-service professional development. An assumption of this research is that teachers who learn to consider themselves as cultural beings are more likely to come to an un-threatened position of openness to their students' cultures and to value the contributions of culture to all learning.

Method and Procedure

Participants will be recruited from the greater Edmonton area individually via word of mouth. Since I work for the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, I am in regular contact with a number of Aboriginal and visible minority groups who have expressed interest in my study and have either recommended teachers they know for the study or expressed a willingness to do so. After speaking with participants by phone, I will meet individually with each of them and explain the study both orally and in written form. Participants who express an interest in the study and agree to participate will be accepted.

Over a period of three months, research participants will meet in my home for approximately three hours once weekly with a two-week break in the middle. The first meeting will consist of communicating the research parameters and allowing participants to introduce themselves. Consent letters will be signed after reading and discussing the research description and responding to questions or concerns. Following this meeting, eight subsequent research meetings will take place within the following general parameters:

1. Discussion of articles about culture and learning which will have been given to participants at the first meeting and discussion of articles brought by participants to share with the group as they choose to do so.
2. Sharing of thoughts about culture and teaching from life experience.
3. Arts-based response to questions that arose out of previous research meetings. These will be organized around a particular art form. For example, one week we will explore visual responses to cultural issues, another will be literary and another dramatic. These group sessions will be facilitated by the researcher with frequent input from participants and based on issues that arose from collaborative conversations. Arts-responses will alternate between a session where participants explore a given theme as a group and a session where an arts-based assignment completed individually at home would be presented to the group and discussed collectively. (See Appendix for examples of arts-based research prompts.)
4. Discussion of the art response experience and its significance to understanding of culture.
5. Two of the research meetings will focus on participant response to published resources for intercultural teaching and learning and two will include sharing of participant created lesson plans and resources constructed specifically for this study.
6. Participants will write four reflections on their cultural identity process throughout the research period, which will be collected and kept by the researcher for analysis. As researcher, I will write my own reflection journal and contribute comments to the

7. Data analysis. Participant reflections will be kept private between the researcher and individual participants. Researcher journal reflections will not be shared with participants.

All processes involving conversation will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions will be regularly provided to participants for clarification and correction and summaries made by the researcher and given to participants. Arts processes will be captured in a form most suitable for the art form. For example, dramatic enactments will be video recorded or digitally photographed. Literary responses will be collected as written artifacts and visual responses will be digitally photographed. Visual art will also be kept by the researcher for the duration of the research project. Following analysis, the originals will be returned to participants, but photographs and records of those artifacts will remain with the researcher.

Compliance with University of Alberta Standards

1. How will you explain the purpose and nature of the research to prospective participants.

I will explain the research individually to all potential participants and also to the group at the first research meeting. They will be informed that the research is about exploring teacher identity through culture. It is intended to bring participants' tacit knowledge about themselves as cultural beings to the fore and to enable this knowledge to be used by participants as a base of cultural strength for engaging in more relevant intercultural teaching and learning. The case study research framework is a context for participants and researcher to reflect upon practice. The tools of collaborative conversation and arts response will be used to facilitate a sense of group safety and encouragement within which participants may gain insight into their practice and comfortably explore new teaching strategies. Throughout the research we will read articles about cultural issues. Participants will be encouraged to find and contribute articles to the group's learning process. Outside of the research meetings, individual work will entail: four written reflections, the creation of two lesson plans and four art response home assignments which they will share with the group unless they make the decision to opt out at given intervals for whatever reason. The research project is both an awareness and a capacity building endeavor. It will engage both individual growth and collective growth within the research group.

Benefits to participants will be explained as:

- an opportunity to explore teacher identity in a safe and encouraging professional environment
- a forum within which to examine the complexities of culture in teaching and learning
- under the umbrella of culture, an opportunity to develop new teaching skills, be exposed to useful resources and to discuss teaching plans with other professionals
- a space to try several forms of art response that may be useful in encouraging student response from a variety of cultures since many of these art forms do not involve spoken language – often a barrier for newcomers to Canada and those for whom it is culturally inappropriate to speak to people in authority

2. (a) What steps will you take to obtain the free and informed consent of the participants? e.g. How will you provide opportunities for potential participants to exercise their right to not participate?

Participant information letters and consent forms state that participants have the right to opt out at any time without penalty or repercussion. They will also be told this during the introductory meeting and reminded of this provision throughout the research.

(b) Are there limited and/or temporary exceptions to the general requirements for full disclosure of information? If yes, (i) please describe the exception(s) (ii) justify the need for the exception(s), and (iii) explain the provisions for debriefing participants.

Not applicable.

(c) Are there any circumstances which could compromise the voluntary consent of participants (e.g., incentives, captive populations, second relationship)? If yes, how will these circumstances be dealt with?

All participants will be of legal age. None are from a vulnerable population. I have no previous relationship with any of my research participants.

3. How will you provide opportunities for your participants to exercise the right to opt out without penalty, harm or loss of promised benefit?

Participants will be told in the information letter and consent form that they may opt out of the study at any time and that they may withdraw any art response or transcribed comment they do not wish to contribute to the research. This right will also be communicated at the initial meeting and repeated at subsequent research sessions.

4. (a) How will you address privacy, anonymity and confidentiality issues?

Confidentiality will be maintained by explaining to participants that all research comments remain within the group and are not to be discussed outside of the research in any other contexts. Following the data gathering process of three months, participants will be free to discuss general research findings but will be enjoined to respect the individuals in the group by not identifying them, speculating on their motivations or commenting on their research contributions. They will be told that I will discuss our research on a regular basis with my advisor, Dr. Ingrid Johnston, and eventually with my committee members, but not with others outside of the research.

(b) If you plan to record sounds or images in your project, how will you address anonymity and confidentiality of participants and non-participants?

Pseudonyms will be used in the written research and no recordings of their conversations will be used. Any video footage will have digital alterations to hide personal identities. Digital photographs will be altered to blur facial features. Their permission to use any art response data will be requested and whatever they refuse will not be used in the final analysis, presentation or dissemination of the research findings. All data will be securely stored.

5. Will there be any risk, threat or harm to the participants or to others? If yes, (a) please elaborate and (b) how will you minimize the risk, threat or harm?

There is very little possibility of risk, threat or harm to participants. The only risk is the possibility of loss of reputation and this has been addressed through the measures taken to ensure confidentiality, anonymity and secure storage of data. The consent form includes the contact information for Dr. Ingrid Johnston with the caveat that participants may communicate with her if they believe they have reason to doubt their safety during the research project.

6. How will you provide for security of the data during the study and for a minimum of 5 years thereafter?

Data will be kept in my home office and filed for no less than seven years in a secure cabinet.

7. If you involve research assistants, transcribers, interpreters and/or other personnel to carry out specific research tasks in your research, how will you ensure that they comply with the Standards?

I will not use research assistants or transcribers. I will be the only person handling data and engaging with participants.

8. Please describe any other procedures relevant to complying with the Standards.

Not applicable.

Crossroads of Possibility: exploring teacher cultural identity

Information letter to participants

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a doctoral study entitled: *Crossroads of Possibility: exploring teacher cultural identity*. It will be conducted by Marie Gervais in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta, for the purpose of completing the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education. This case study research project is both a group and an individual exploration of teacher identity under the general framework of culture. It is intended to build a base of cultural strength for engaging in authentic intercultural teaching and learning. We will engage in collaborative conversation to encourage a safe and encouraging environment for professionals to explore the issues of culture. Another aspect of this research is the opportunity to explore culture through several arts responses. No previous art knowledge is required.

We will be exploring the questions: What is culture? What roles do my own cultural affiliations and experiences play in my sense of self as teacher? How does my own perception of the role of culture in teaching and learning affect my teaching practice? The research will offer: 1) an opportunity to explore teacher identity in a safe and encouraging professional environment, 2) a forum within which to examine the complexities of culture in teaching and learning, 3) an opportunity to develop new teaching skills, exposure to useful resources and to discuss teaching plans with other professionals, all under the umbrella of culture, and 4) a space to try several forms of art response that may be useful in encouraging student response from a variety of cultures since many of these art forms do not involve spoken language – often a barrier for newcomers to Canada and those for whom it is culturally inappropriate to speak to people in authority.

Project description and timeline

Research participants will meet in my home, 275 Ormsby Road East (188 St. and 69 Ave.), Edmonton, on a mutually agreed upon day and time for 3 hours for 8 different weeks over a period of three months. Outside of the research meetings, individual work will entail: four written reflections, the sharing of two lesson plans created for this research and four art response home assignments which will be shared with the group at the discretion of individual participants. This outside work will take approximately 1-2 hours of your time each week in addition to the research meetings.

Procedures

Research meetings will take place within the following general parameters:

1. Discussion of articles about culture and learning which will have been given to participants at the first meeting and discussion of articles brought by participants to share with the group as they choose to do so.
2. Sharing of thoughts about culture and teaching from participant lived experience.
3. Arts-based response to questions that arose out of previous research meetings. These will be organized around a particular art form. For example, one week we will explore visual responses to cultural issues, another will be literary and another dramatic. These group sessions will be facilitated by the researcher with frequent input from participants and based on issues that arose from collaborative conversations. Arts-responses will alternate between a session where participants explore a given theme as a group and a session where an arts-based assignment completed individually at home would be presented to the group and discussed collectively.
4. Discussion of the art response experience and its significance to understanding of culture.
5. Two of the research meetings will focus on participant response to published resources for intercultural teaching and learning and two will include sharing of participant created lesson plans and materials.
6. Participants will write four reflections on their cultural identity process throughout the research period, which will be collected and kept by the researcher for analysis.

Data collection and handling

All processes involving conversation will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions will be regularly provided to participants for clarification and correction. Summaries prepared by Marie Gervais will be given to participants. Arts processes will be captured in a form most suitable for the art form. For example, dramatic enactments will be video recorded or digitally photographed. Literary responses will be collected as written artifacts and visual responses will be digitally photographed. Visual art will also be kept by Marie Gervais for the duration of the research project and returned to respective participants following analysis. Participants may withdraw any art response or transcribed comment they do not wish to contribute to the research.

Additional Information

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. As a participant in the study, you would have the right opt out at any time without penalty, in which case any data collected from you would not be used as data and would be returned to you or destroyed. In order to maintain confidentiality, participants will be asked not to discuss outside of the research group any information that is shared by others during the meetings. Following the data gathering process of three months, participants will be free to discuss general research findings but are enjoined to respect the individuals in the group by not identifying them or speculating on their motivations. I will discuss our research on a regular basis with my advisor, Dr. Ingrid Johnston and eventually with my doctoral committee members, but not with others outside of the research. At the first meeting participants will choose pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality in final written reports. Any visual images of participants will be digitally altered to hide individual identities. No voice recordings will be used in the dissemination of the data. All data will be handled in compliance with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. *Original artifacts that participants create during the research process will be mailed back to them, upon request, following data analysis and writing of the doctoral dissertation. Please note that data may be used for other scholarly publications in addition to the doctoral dissertation.*

Ethics approval statement

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the university of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

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University of Alberta Research Consent Form

I,_____________________________, consent to be a participant in the *Crossroads of Possibility: exploring teacher cultural identity*, case study research project led by Marie Gervais, Doctoral Student in Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. This study is both a group and an individual exploration of teacher identity under the general umbrella concept of culture. It is intended to build a base of cultural strength for engaging in authentic intercultural teaching and learning and to uncover the processes of teacher cultural identity as they unfold during the research.

I understand that we will be exploring the questions: *What is culture? What roles do my own cultural affiliations and experiences play in my sense of self as teacher? How does my own perception of the role of culture in teaching and learning affect my teaching practice?* This exploration will be framed by the experience of both collaborative conversation and arts-based research.

I realize that the study will require one information meeting and eight research sessions over a period of three months. During these eight sessions we will meet weekly for 3 hours on a day and time mutually agreeable to all participants in the home of Marie Gervais at 275 Ormsby Road East, Edmonton (188 St. and 69 Ave.). I am aware that in addition to the research meeting sessions there will be approximately 1-2 hours of outside work related to the project in the form of reading articles about culture, writing four personal reflections on my process of growth, bringing two lesson plans to share with the research group, and four art response assignments.

I realize that I may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty, all information gathered will be treated confidentially by the researcher, release of data will be subject to my approval, information will involve only the participants in this research group, Dr. Ingrid Johnston and Marie Gervais' doctoral research committee. I know that data will be kept safe and on file for no less than seven years and that it is the intent of the researcher to use this information for her doctoral dissertation and other scholarly writing and publication.

I understand that I may review data that I contribute and withdraw any personal information from the research at any time without reprisal and that I may receive a copy of the final conclusions in addition to any materials I submitted to the research that I wish to have returned via Canada Post.

______________________________ ______________________________

Signature of participant Date signed

In case of concerns, please contact Dr. Ingrid Johnston: ingrid.johnston@ualberta.ca. Office phone: 492-3751.
Marie Gervais may be contacted at: mgervais@shaw.ca. Home phone: 81-6977, work phone: 425-4645.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at 492-3751.

Appendix: Arts-based research methodology

Examples of possible arts-based prompts in cultural exploration

a) Poetry: The facilitator/researcher asks participants to close their eyes and visualize a time in their lives when they felt excluded on the basis of a cultural determinant such as race, ethnicity, language, gender, social class or religion. When participants can fully visualize the experience, they sit quietly writing their thoughts as a poem. 15-20 minutes later, participants read their poems to each other. A discussion ensues about the meanings and emotions evoked through the poetry. Participants reflect orally about how this experience has affected their understanding of themselves and each other as cultural beings.

b) As a home assignment, participants reflect upon a student they taught with whom they felt they had limited success. They then write a poem about that student from the perspective of how the student might have been marginalized through cultural determinants (race, ethnicity, language, gender, social class, religion).

c) Poetry and visual expression– home assignment: Participants use highlighter pens to highlight phrases from their written reflections that appear particularly significant to them with regard to their teacher practice. They then take those highlighted statements and combine them as found-data poetry. Throughout the week participants look for an image/metaphor that captures visually what the data poem is trying to communicate. At the next research session, participants share the poems and the images with the group who respond verbally. As a whole, the group uses both the data poems and the image/metaphors to determine cultural assumptions. These assumptions are eventually focused to make a group statement about cultural patterning as it manifests itself through teacher practice.

d) Image: the group is divided into partners and provided with a pile of magazines, a large sheet of paper for each partner group, scissors and glue. They work silently to choose images and words from magazines which they use to create.

e) Creation of a joint collage that visually demonstrates their definition of the word 'culture'. The collage process has to be negotiated between the partners so that it is visually satisfying to both, however they must do this without speaking. When both are satisfied that the collage is finished, they stop working. Participants then talk about how they experienced that process and how it could be a metaphor for learning cultural responsiveness. They spend time writing in their journals about how this exercise has ramifications for their teaching.

f) Drama: an individual from the group uses five chairs and a water bottle to create a visual image of power imbalance. The group discusses what the image makes them think of in life (government, school, parent-child relationships, family structure etc). Their chair image is then changed to a social setting where an individual uses participants in the group to re-create the power imbalance image. Suggestions from the group to move one person at a time into a more equitable image are taken as the group sees fit. They then discuss what keeps inequity in place and what it would take to make changes that would bring the marginalized into a more level playing field. From this experience, participants talk about their own experiences with power imbalance in teaching and what they have learned from the collective exploration of this theme.

g) Music: participants bring a recording or play/sing a song that has special significance to them. Each person gives their rationale behind the selection of that particular song and then attempt with the assistance of the group to determine how much of their song choice is due to cultural experience.